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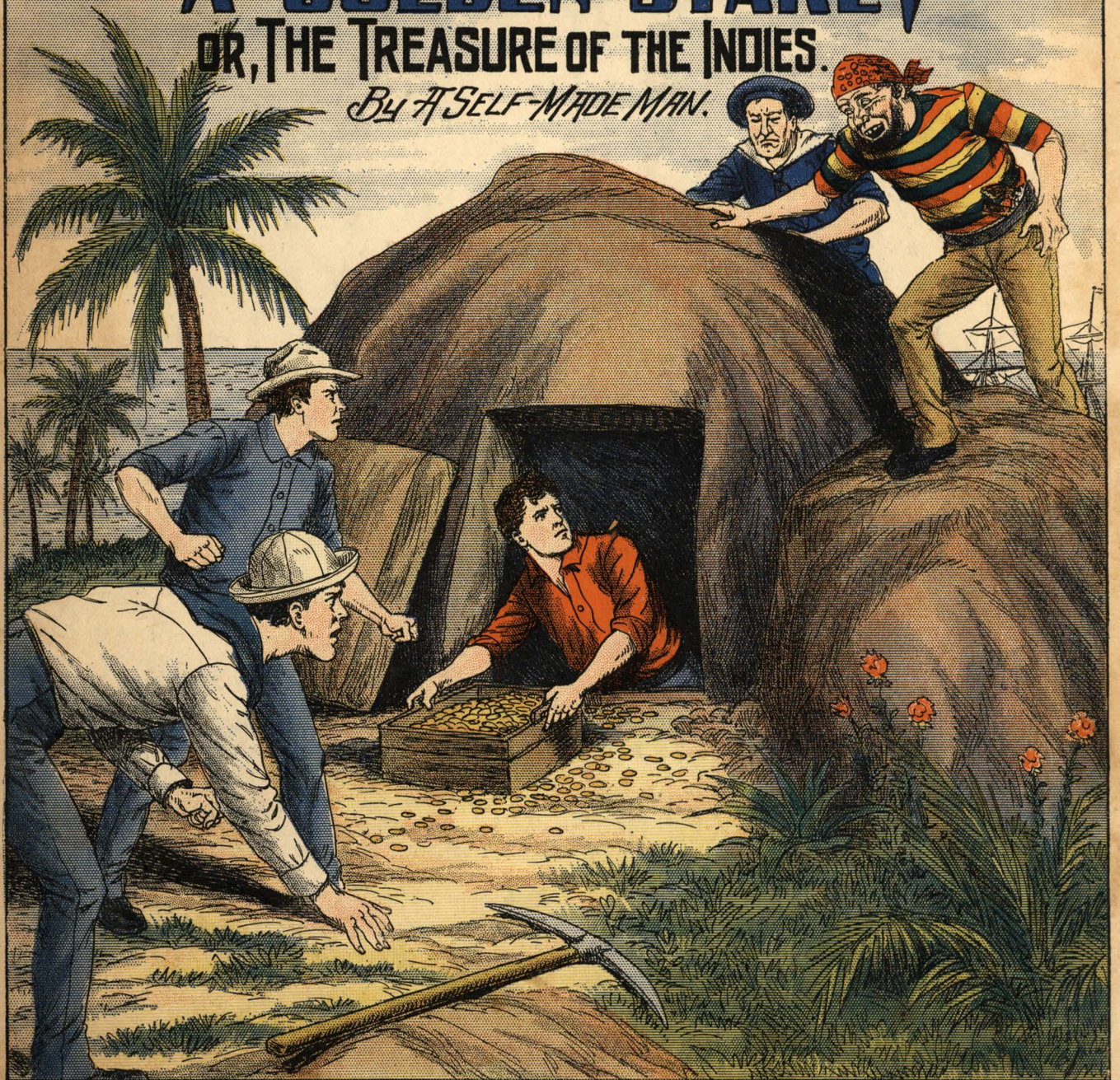
FAME AND FORTUNE

STORIES OF **WEEKLY** WHO MAKE

BOYS MONEY.

A GOLDEN STAKE; OR, THE TREASURE OF THE INDIES.

By A SELF-MADE MAN.



As Jack lifted the first box of coin out of the opening two forms suddenly appeared upon the rocks behind him. Tom and Mat recognized the piratical-looking Jim Crowe in the lead, and sprang forward to defend the treasure.

Fame and Fortune Weekly

STORIES OF BOYS WHO MAKE MONEY

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A GOLDEN STAKE

OR,

THE TREASURE OF THE INDIES

By A SELF-MADE MAN

CHAPTER I.

JIM CROWE, A. B.

"Hello, sonny!"

Jack Dalton, a stalwart, good-looking boy of seventeen years, who, with his back to the counter, was sorting over a score of letters he had just taken from the mail pouch, preliminary to distributing them in the pigeon-holes lettered from A to Y, turned around and looked at the person who had addressed him.

He had not heard any one enter the store, which was a general one, kept by Josiah Norris, a retired sea captain, on Main Street, in the village of Blueville, Long Island.

As he faced the visitor Jack saw that he was a perfect stranger in the village.

Anybody could see with half an eye that he was a sailor, though he was dressed in a new suit of shore-going togs, and not a prepossessing looking one, either.

There was an evil glint in his shifty eye that the boy did not like.

If he wasn't a rascal at heart then his face belied him.

At any rate, that's the way Jack sized him up as they looked at each other across the counter.

"Well, sonny," said the mariner, with a wicked sort of chuckle, which seemed to come from his boots, his voice was so hoarse, "when ye have got through takin' a sight at me I'd like to ask ye a question or two."

"What do you want to know?" asked Jack, not over politely, for he distrusted the man.

"I'll allow this store is kept by Josiah Norris, for his name is on the sign over the door, but I'd like to know if

he's known as Cap'n Josiah Norris," and the sailor put a strong accent on the word "captain."

"Yes, he is," replied Jack.

"Thank ye, sonny," replied the visitor, with a satisfied grin, "I'm glad to hear it. The cap'n and me is old friends."

"Old friends!" exclaimed the boy, somewhat surprised.

"That's right, sonny. I sailed with the cap'n a number of v'y'ges in his old hooker, the Mary Ellen. I've been huntin' for him this ten year back."

"What's your name?"

"My name is Jim Crowe, A. B."

"A. B.? What does that mean?"

"That means able bodied, sonny. I'm a sailor from keel to truck, and I'm that pickled with brine that ye kin smell the salt in my breath."

Jack was of the opinion that the fellow's breath smelt of something stronger even than sea brine, but didn't consider it necessary to say so.

"Well, what can I do for you, Mr. Crowe?" he asked.

"Avast there, my hearty! Drop the handle. I ain't used to it. Call me Jim, or Crowe, or both together, if ye like, but don't lay on the mister."

"What do you want?"

"I want the cap'n. As soon as I ran foul of a clue to his bein' in this here port I made all plain sail from New York and here I am. It's a satisfacshun to know that I hit it all right."

"You want to see Captain Josiah Norris?"

"That's what I said, sonny. I want to see the cap'n, and I want to see him bad."

"Well, he's out just at present."

"When d'ye expect him back?"

"I couldn't say. He might return in an hour, and then he mightn't be back till after dark."

"Then, with your permissun, sonny, I'll wait."

"I think you'd better come back later on," said Jack, who did not relish the idea of having the hard-looking sailor hanging around the place.

"Sorry, sonny, but I ain't no place to go. That chair by the stove looks like a snug anchorage and I'll take possessun of it. P'raps ye wouldn't mind handin' me out a hunk of cheese and some crackers. I ain't had nothin' to eat since I left the metropolis, and I feel kind of empty 'tweendecks."

"I s'pose you've got the price?" said Jack, without moving.

"I reckon I have, sonny, but the cap'n wouldn't charge me nothin' if he was here."

"As I don't know you I'll have to ask you to come up. If you're an old friend of Captain Norris he'll probably return you the money."

"What's the damage?"

"The crackers and cheese will be ten cents. If you want a mug of cider, too, that will cost you another nickel."

"Haven't you got somethin' stronger'n cider, sonny?"

"No. If you want anything in the line of spirits you'll have to go to the tavern in the next block."

"That's a pity. I reckon I'll have to put up with the cider, though it's a poor thing to swab a chap's throat out after swallerin' a cargo of fog. Here's a quarter. Ye kin give me a dime change."

Jim Crowe, A. B., took possession of the armchair in front of the stove, where he proceeded to make himself at home with the cheese, crackers and cider that Jack placed before him.

The boy resumed the sorting of the letters and then he placed them in boxes, after which he followed the same course with the dozen odd papers that the pouch contained, during which operation he cast several furtive glances at the strange sailor, wondering what he had called to see Captain Norris for, and whether the captain would be glad to see him after so many years.

Jack was an orphan, and to his knowledge had not a relative in the world.

When his mother died, eight years since, he had come to live and tend store for the captain, who a short time before that had retired from active service as skipper of the brig Mary Ellen, which was in the West Indian trade, and had come to Blueville and invested a portion of his savings in the general store.

While Captain Norris had relatives, with whom he occasionally corresponded, he was not troubled with visits from them, and lived with Jack as his only companion in three rooms above the store.

He was very fond of Jack, treating the boy as if he were his son, and Jack thought a whole lot of him in consequence.

The captain was now about sixty-five years of age, with bushy gray whiskers and a thick head of hair of the same tinge.

His complexion was tanned to the color of mahogany by

the sun and winds of the tropics, and he was as hale and hearty as any man could be at his age.

Jack was a great favorite in the village, not only with the girls and boys, but with the grown-ups as well, for he had a sunny disposition, and was always willing to do a favor for anybody that wanted it.

He had all the liberty to enjoy himself that any boy could ask for under his circumstances, and with rugged health and a large fund of animal spirits to draw on, he was as contented as the day was long.

When Jim Crowe had finished his frugal lunch he picked up a copy of the village paper he found at hand and, planting his muddy boots against the grate of the stove, for the spring day was chilly, he proceeded to read the local and other intelligence.

Customers dropped in occasionally and were waited on by Jack.

All of them noticed the sailor, because he was a stranger, and they asked the boy who he was, and what he was doing in the store.

Jack's answer to all was that the man's name was Jim Crowe, and that he had called to see Captain Norris, who was out.

Among the visitors to the store were Tom Trimble and Mat Mulford, two particular friends of Jack's.

Tom came in to get a package of tobacco for his father, and Mat arrived almost immediately afterward to get something that his mother wanted.

"Who's the chap over by the stove?" asked Tom. "He looks like a sailor."

"He is a sailor," replied Jack. "His name is Jim Crowe."

"He seems to be taking things easy for a stranger."

Jack explained why the sailor was there.

At that point Mat entered the store, and the first thing he noticed was the maritime visitor.

Jack had to tell him who the sailor was and the object of his call.

"I don't like his looks," said Mat.

"Neither do I," chimed in Tom.

"He's got a bad eye," said Jack. "I don't fancy the way he sized me up when he came in the store. I wish the captain would come and send him about his business."

While the boys were talking together the sailor got up and approached them.

He looked Tom and Mat over and then said to Jack:

"Well, sonny, it's 'bout time the cap'n hove in sight, ain't it?"

"Captain Norris usually takes his time when he goes anywhere," replied Jack.

"Jest so," grinned the sailor. "I s'pose you're skipper here when he's away. You ain't his son, are ye?"

"No."

"P'raps you're his nephew?"

"No. I'm no relation of his."

"Jest so," chuckled Crowe. "Cap'n married?"

"No," replied Jack.

"D'ye s'pose the cap'n has a spare room for an old shipmate?"

Jack shook his head.

"There's only three rooms upstairs. Captain Norris oc-

cupies the front one, I use the small one next to it, and the back room is kitchen and dining room combined. We've no room for visitors."

"So there ain't nobody in the house 'cept the cap'n and you, eh?" said the sailor, with a look of satisfaction. "That's jest like the old man. He was always for keepin' to himself."

At that moment the door opened and Captain Norris entered the store.

"There's Captain Norris now," said Jack.

The sailor turned, and then with a grin advanced toward the storekeeper, holding out his hand.

"I reckon I've found ye at last, cap'n, and I'm mighty glad to see ye ag'in arter ten long years that ye managed to put between us. Ye ain't changed much in that time, and I don't reckon that I have, either. I'm the same old shellback, and it ought to put ye in mind of old times to see me once more."

Captain Norris didn't look as if he was overjoyed at seeing one of his old hands again.

In fact, the unexpected appearance of Jim Crowe, A. B., seemed to give him a chill.

The boys noticed that he started back aghast and looked much discomposed.

He made no effort to welcome the sailor, but stared at him with mouth half open.

He started to say something, but the words died away in his throat.

Evidently if Jim Crowe had expected a royal reception, with a fatted calf in the background, he was disappointed.

CHAPTER II.

"I WANT THE CHART, AND I'M GOIN' TO HAVE IT OR YOUR LIFE."

"Ain't ye got a word of welcome for your old shipmate, cap'n?" grinned the sailor, sardonically, as he fixed the retired skipper with his wicked eyes. "Maybe ye thought I was dead and buried years ago, and ye are so overj'yed at seein' me alive that ye can't speak."

"So it's really you, Jim Crowe," said the captain at last, in a hollow kind of voice that didn't seem natural to Jack or the other boys, who regarded the meeting of Captain Norris and the stranger with no little interest and curiosity.

"Right ye are, cap'n; it's me, sure enough. I told ye there warn't no use of ye tryin' to shake me. I ain't to be shook, leastways not so long as ye hold on to that there chart which——"

"Hush!" said the captain. "Come this way and I'll talk to you."

Captain Norris led the way to the back part of the store.

"I don't know how you managed to find me out, Crowe, but since you have we'll talk business right from the start."

"That's what I like to hear, cap'n," chuckled the visitor.

"It won't do you no good to hang around this village keeping your eye on me, Crowe. You won't gain anything by it. I haven't used the chart, and I don't expect to now."

"Ye couldn't find the island, I reckon. Ye can't tell me that ye didn't look for it, for I know ye did."

"I'll allow I hunted for it, but I couldn't find it."

"Then ye are willin' to give up the dockymment, are ye?"

"No, I'm not," replied the storekeeper, firmly. "There's a fortune in it for some one younger than me, and I've picked out the party who's to enj'y it."

"Oh, ye have," snarled Crowe, with a wicked gleam in his eye. "Ye have picked out someone ye mean to give it to?"

"I have."

"And where do I come in? Half of that there gold belongs to me."

"No," replied the captain, firmly, "you never had any right to that chart at all. If you had I would have seen that you had a fair show along with me to realize on the strength of it."

"I never had no right to it, eh?" gritted the sailor.

"Not the slightest. You as good as murdered the man who owned it. He gave it to me in gratitude for what I did for him when he lay dying at the hospital in Rio. He gave it to me also on the condition that I would keep it from you. I swore to do so, and I've kept my oath."

"Jest so," sneered Crowe. "Well, it ain't done ye no good, has it?"

"Not a particle."

"Then I'd advise ye to give it to me and save trouble."

"I doubt if you could find the island either."

"Ye needn't worry 'bout that. If I don't find the island there's no harm done. If I do find it I'll send ye a portion of the gold, though I don't reckon that I owe ye much arter the way ye've treated me. However, I figure that there's more gold on that there island than I kin spend, and I'll allow ye are entitled to what I don't want."

"I'll make no deal of that kind with you, Crowe. I'm going to will that paper to somebody I think the world of. As I expect to live some years yet the chart is safe enough till the Lord calls on me to go."

"Ye may live as long as ye think ye will, and then ag'in," with a wicked leer, "ye may die sudden like. If I was a insurance comp'ny I wouldn't take no risk on ye as long as ye hold on to that there chart."

"Do you mean to threaten me?" demanded Captain Norris, angrily.

"I reckon I ain't tellin' ye more'n ye suspect yourself, otherwise ye wouldn't have taken such precious good care to throw me off your scent."

"You're a conscienceless scoundrel, Jim Crowe. I have no doubt you wouldn't hesitate to take my life if you saw your way clear to that chart; but you'll never find it, mark you. It's hidden where you nor no one else can find it till I die a natural death."

The sailor seemed considerably taken aback by the captain's words.

"Jest so," he muttered. "Ye've hidden it. Ye've done this to prevent me from gettin' my rights. Well s'pose ye have hidden it, ain't your life worth somethin'? Do ye want to run the risk of bein' cut off sudden like, and leavin' that there dockymment as a extra hazardous risk to someone ye think the world of?"

"You villain!" roared Captain Norris, seizing the sailor with both hands. "I've half a mind to——"

"Why don't ye finish it?" replied Crowe, who made not the slightest resistance to the captain's attack, although his muscular frame showed that he was well able to defend

himself if necessary. "Why don't ye say what's in your mind?"

"You're an infernal rascal!"

"Jest so," replied Crowe, coolly. "Keep on. My feelin's is that hardened I kin stand it. I'll allow when we sailed together ye could lay the law down to us chaps from the break of the poop as strong as any cap'n I ever knowed. Ye warn't no milk-and-water skipper. Ye warn't afraid of no man 'board the hooker. But it's diff'rent now. It's been diff'rent these ten year back. Ye are afraid of me."

"Afraid of you!"

"Ye have shown it in a dozen ways. What has changed ye? That there chart, and ye know it. Ye know I intend to have it if—I have to take your life," the sailor hissed. "So what's the use of tryin' to hold me off? Ye are takin' chances holdin' out ag'in me. When a chap has waited ten year for somethin' he's determined to git he ain't in no humor for triflin'."

The sailor clearly meant every word he said, and Captain Norris knew it.

However, he deemed it prudent to temporize with the rascal.

"I'm willing to give you \$500 cash, Crowe, if you'll agree to quit the village and not return," he said.

"What's \$500 in cash when maybe there's a million in gold hidden away on that there island?"

"A bird in the hand is worth two in the bush. There's no certainty about the treasure being on the island even if the chart eventually leads to the island."

"You hand over the chart and I'll take all the chances of findin' the island and the gold, too," replied the sailor.

"You refuse my offer, then?"

"I wouldn't look at it. I want the chart, and I'm goin' to have it or your life!" gritted the sailor.

"Then you'll have to take my life, for the chart you'll never get while I'm alive."

"I'll give ye another chance. Fit out a schooner, take me with ye and we'll hunt for the island and gold together. If we find the treasure we'll divide even. Then ye can go your way and I'll go mine. Is it a bargain?"

The speaker's eyes snapped as he uttered the words.

"I'll think it over. Call here in the morning and you shall have my answer, one way or the other," said Captain Norris.

Crowe fixed the captain with his wicked eyes, and seemed to be debating in his mind whether to give the old man time or not.

"I'll let ye think it over," he said finally, with a treacherous twinkle that ought to have warned the skipper that the sailor was not to be trusted. "I'll be around for your answer in the mornin'. See that it's yes, or it will be wuss for ye. D'ye understand?" and Crowe turned sharp around and walked out of the store with that peculiar rolling gait which characterizes an old sailor.

Captain Norris heaved a sigh of relief as he watched him disappear, and then slowly walked upstairs with bent head and shaky step.

"The crisis has come at last, after all these years," he whispered to himself. "I feared it in spite of the lapse of time. It was my hope that the rascal was dead. I knew that as long as he lived he never would cease looking for

me. He swore that he would track me if he spent his whole life doing it, and he has kept his word. Well, his perseverance shall do him no good as far as the chart is concerned. My oath must be kept even at the cost of my life. For me the treasure of the Indies has no further significance, but the chart shall be my legacy to Jack. He is young, and plucky, and stalwart. He may be able to locate the island some time, and if the treasure is there it shall be his."

The captain entered his room and shut the door behind him.

CHAPTER III.

THE CAPTAIN'S STORY.

The three boys had watched the interview between Captain Norris and the unsavory-looking sailor in a furtive way, Tom and Mat wholly forgetting the errands that had brought them to the store.

They only caught a word now and then when either the captain or Crowe raised his voice above the low tone in which they were carrying on their conversation.

The actions of the two men, however, spoke volumes, and the boys readily believed that the subject under discussion was a weighty one.

"That sailor seems to be laying the law down to Captain Norris," said Tom Trimble, in a low tone.

Jack could not help agreeing with him, and he wondered that the captain did not throw the rascal out of the store.

The captain made no attempt to do so, however, though when his passion momentarily got the better of him, and he laid his hands menacingly on the sailor, the boys looked to see a scrap, but it didn't materialize.

Finally Jim Crowe left the store and Captain Norris went upstairs.

"That sailor acted as though he had a hold over the captain," said Mat Mulford, with a suggestive shake of the head. "Otherwise, from what I've seen of the old man, he'd have got the bounce."

"That's right," coincided Tom. "Captain Norris isn't a man to be trifled with, is he, Jack?"

"No, he isn't. I can't understand why he put up with the rascal," said Jack.

"Looks very mysterious," interjected Mat.

"It certainly does," agreed Tom. "What do you think about it, Jack?"

"I don't know what to think. I'm bound to say that I don't like it. That Jim Crowe isn't up to any good coming here."

"I guess he'll bear watching," said Mat.

"I wouldn't like to meet him on the county road of a dark night," put in Tom.

"Neither would I," said Mat. "He's a hard customer."

"Well, I must be going," said Tom, recollecting what had brought him to the store. "I want two spools No. 60 black, and one spool No. 70 white, Clark's thread."

"All right," replied Jack. "I'll get them for you."

He stepped across to a cabinet behind the counter on the opposite side of the store, picked out the spools, wrapped them up and handed them to Tom.

"Anything else?" he inquired.

"No, that's all. So long," and Trimble left the store.

"I want a package of Old Crow tobacco," said Mat.

Jack handed it to him.

"That's all," said Mat, putting it in his pocket. "Will you be down to the club to-night?"

"I guess so," answered Jack, picking up the salesbook and entering the two purchases in it.

While he was doing it Mat said good-bye and went away.

"I'd give a whole lot to know what that sailor had to say to the captain," he said to himself, looking reflectively at the chair by the stove last occupied by Jim Crowe. "He wasn't a welcome visitor, that was evident. In fact, the captain looked surprised and much disturbed as soon as he saw him. I'm afraid Mat was right when he said that rascal has some hold over Captain Norris. I can't see how such a fellow as he could have any hold on the captain. I'm sure the old man never did anything in his life that he was ashamed of. He isn't that kind of man. I hate anything like a mystery. I wonder if that sailor will be back? I shall be tempted to show him the door if he does return, though if he won't take the hint there isn't much likelihood that I'll be able to put him out bodily. He looks as if he could handle me with one hand. It's a pity he turned up."

Just then two men came in to see if any mail had come for them.

There was a paper for one of them, and the other treated to cigars.

Then a girl came in with a jug and asked for a quart of molasses.

While he was waiting on her Captain Norris came downstairs and re-entered the store.

He went to the stove, and seating himself in the chair vacated by Jim Crowe, leaned his head on his hand and dropped into a brown study.

The girl departed with the molasses and Jack busied himself about the store, and waited on other customers who came in.

At length it grew dark, and the captain still sat motionless in his chair.

Jack watched him occasionally with some uneasiness.

It wasn't at all like Captain Norris to act in such an odd way.

Jack, as he started to light the lamps, was satisfied there was something out of the common the matter with the old man.

Whatever it was, it evidently arose from the visit of Jim Crowe.

However, unless the captain chose to take him into his confidence he wasn't likely to learn anything about the matter.

At length Captain Norris raised his head and called Jack over to the stove.

"Jack," he said, solemnly, "I've got something to tell you."

"What is it, captain?"

"You saw that sailor who was here awhile ago?"

"Yes."

"He's the greatest scoundrel unhung."

"I believe you, captain. He's got a bad eye, and I sized him up as a rascal when he first came in the store and asked for you."

"He has threatened to kill me, Jack."

"What for?" asked the boy, greatly startled.

"Because I have something in my possession that he covets."

"Why don't you send for the constable and have him arrested?"

"I've been thinking of doing that, Jack; but I fear it would afford me but a temporary respite. When he got out of jail he would seek to carry out his threat. I've known him for the matter of fifteen years, and he's the only man I've ever felt powerless to handle."

"But if you don't have him arrested he may do you an injury."

"I'll have to risk it, Jack. He's coming here in the morning to get my answer to a proposition he made me. On account of an obligation, a very sacred one, I entered into eleven years ago in Rio de Janeiro, I cannot comply with his scheme, even if I felt disposed to do so, and consequently I cannot say to what extremes the villain will go when he receives my ultimatum. Owing to this crisis in my affairs I have decided that it is necessary to take you into my confidence. I am going to tell you a story that will probably astonish you. It is the story of pirate gold, buried on a certain island in the Caribbean Sea."

"Pirate gold!" ejaculated Jack, in surprise.

"Yes. You remember that I have told you many tales of the pirates of the Spanish Main, and of the West Indian waters."

Jack nodded and waited with great interest for the old skipper to go on.

"I told you how those rascals originated; how under different leaders they flourished and painted the tropical seas red with human blood; how they plundered richly-freighted galleons, most of which in those days flew the flag of Spain, and how they spent the bulk of their ill-gotten spoils in riotous living, and eventually ended their criminal careers, as a rule, at the end of a halter. You remember all this, Jack?"

"Yes, captain."

"Well, my boy, you also recollect that I told you it was the custom of those villains to bury their plunder when hard pressed by justice, or when they were unable for divers reasons to dispose of accumulated swag, expecting to recover it at some later time when a safe opportunity presented itself."

"Yes, sir. I remember all that, and I've read about it, too."

"Most of the stuff was no doubt dug up at a future date and squandered by the rascals; but a good deal of this treasure still lies where it was originally buried, mostly in the sands of secluded coves on unfrequented islands in the Caribbean Sea. It is to one of these unrecovered treasures that my story relates," said the captain, wiping his brow with his red bandana handkerchief.

Jack was now an eager listener, and he waited impatiently for further developments.

"When I was at Rio twelve years ago," went on Captain Norris, "I was one night traversing an obscure street close to the water side when I heard a cry of 'murder!' A man ran out of a narrow alley, closely pursued by another with a knife in his hand. As the first man stumbled blindly

toward me, repeating his thrilling cry, the second man closed upon him and raised his knife to finish his bloody work. I had paused in the shadow of one of the buildings and was unnoticed by either. Seeing that murder was about to be committed I sprang out just in time to arrest the impending blow that would no doubt have finished the fleeing man. As I seized the uplifted arm of the would-be murderer, he turned furiously upon me and it was then that I recognized him as a member of my crew—an able seaman named Jim Crowe.”

“Jim Crowe!” ejaculated Jack. “The man who called here this afternoon?”

“The identical man. He was rather staggered when he recognized me as his captain, and as I always was a man who stood no nonsense from my men, and they knew me, he made no further effort to attack me, but dropped his knife and stood in sullen silence until I released his arm, when he immediately took to his heels and disappeared into the alley whence he and the other man had just issued. I then looked for the object of his murderous assault and saw him lying huddled all in a heap a dozen feet away. He was unconscious, and I discovered that he was bleeding from an ugly wound in his breast. At that moment a police patrol came upon the scene and I had the victim of Jim Crowe carried to the hospital.

“Next day I visited him. He was a sailor, stranded in the port, and taking pity on him, I left orders that everything possible be done for him. I went to some small expense to see that he got nourishing food and sundry delicacies, for I felt that I owed him a duty since his assailant was a member of my crew. The poor fellow seemed to be grateful for the attention I gave him, and when he learned from the surgeon that he could not live over twelve hours he sent for me. Then I discovered that the possession of an old chart, disclosing the hiding place of a large store of pirate gold, was the cause of his plight. He had made the casual acquaintance of Jim Crowe at a low drinking house, and when somewhat under the influence of liquor had told Crowe about the chart, and the latter evidently determined to get possession of it by foul means. He attacked the man in the alley as he was leaving the house, stabbed him, and was following up his evil work when, as I have told you, I happened upon the scene and defeated his purpose. To make a long story short, the dying sailor gave me the chart which had cost him his life, and at the same time, on learning that Crowe belonged to my ship, made me swear that if the rascal found out I had the chart, under no consideration should he benefit even to the extent of a dollar in the buried treasure. Next day the sailor was dead.

“Crowe had not returned to the ship and I gave his description to the police. As I had to sail in a day or two I made a deposition of the affair before a notary and left it in the hands of the authorities. Hardly were we in blue waters when Jim Crowe made his appearance from the hold, where he had been hiding with the connivance of several of the crew. I called him up, told him that he was a murderer, and that I considered it to be my duty to hand him over to the authorities of Havana, whither we were bound. He gave me an ugly look, but said nothing. Next day while I was examining the chart in the cabin I hap-

pened to glance up at the open skylight and detected the rascal looking down at me.

“From that moment his shadow has always been upon me. I soon discovered that I had cause to fear the same fate that had befallen the stranded sailor at Rio. He disappeared the night we reached Havana, but turned up again as soon as we put to sea. He had the nerve to propose that we make a joint search for the treasure. I refused and then he threatened me. I had him put in irons, and intended to turn him over to the police in New York, but the day we arrived he escaped with the assistance of two sailors who were chummy with him. Detectives hunted for him in vain, but I felt that I might expect him to turn up when I least expected it.

“On my next trip to the tropics I made a hurried search for the island where the treasure is, but could not locate it. On my return voyage I repeated the quest, but without result. When I returned to New York I found that I was constantly shadowed by the villain or somebody in his interest. I had several narrow escapes for my life, and at length the strain proved too much for me. I resigned my command and determined to bury myself somewhere in the country. I selected this retired village, bought this store, and have lived here undisturbed for ten years.

“As time passed I believed that I had effectually thrown the villain off my track. A month ago I had an ugly dream. I thought the rascal had found me at last. Since then I’ve lived in constant fear that my dream might be realized. To-day it was. The scoundrel has discovered me, and once more I’m at his mercy. But he shall not get the chart, though he kill me. Long ago I decided that the treasure on that Caribbean island should be yours, Jack, if in the course of time you were so fortunate as to find the place described in the chart.”

“Mine!” cried the astonished boy.

“Yes. You are young, with the probability of many years before you. The chart shall be yours to do with as you choose. It is hidden——”

At that moment the sound of cat-like steps in the room above their heads—the captain’s room—reached their ears.

CHAPTER IV.

THE CHART.

“Hark! What’s that?” exclaimed the captain.

They listened intently.

Presently they heard the cautious tread of footsteps again, followed by the fall of some small article on the floor.

“There’s someone in my room,” cried the old skipper, springing to his feet and starting for the stairs at the back part of the store.

Jack was about to follow him when a small boy entered and handed him an order for sundry supplies that his mother wanted.

“I’ll attend to it, Billy,” said Jack, after glancing over the list.

He handed the lad a few candies, placed the order on a file, and as the door closed behind the boy, he started for the stairs to listen at the foot, or ascend to the floor above if he thought his presence was necessary there.

He had hardly taken his stand there when he heard muffled sounds of a struggle on the floor above.

That was enough for Jack.

The captain had evidently surprised the intruder and was trying to capture him.

The boy started up the stairs, two steps at a time.

As he struck the corridor he heard a cry from the captain followed by the words: "Villain, you have stabbed me!"

Jack's blood ran cold, and for an instant he paused aghast.

Then he recovered his nerve and dashed for the old skipper's room.

The door stood open, a gleam of light shining into the corridor, and when he reached it a dreadful sight met his eyes.

Captain Norris lay stretched upon the floor, like a dead man, and standing over him was Jim Crowe, knife in hand, looking down at his terrible work.

With a cry of grief and rage Jack sprang upon the rascal.

The fellow, taken by surprise, started back, tripped over the captain's body and, losing his balance, fell backward.

His head struck the corner of the chimney and he rolled over stunned, the knife falling from his grasp.

Jack paid no further attention to him, but devoted his energies to Captain Norris, who seemed to be recovering his faculties.

The boy tore open the old man's vest and shirt and saw that he was bleeding profusely from a wound in his side.

Taking the handkerchief from his pocket he tried to stanch the flow of blood.

The captain opened his eyes and looked at him.

"Jack," he said, feebly, "I fear I'm done for. That villain played a march on me. He came back on the sly, and I caught him searching my room for the chart. I grabbed him, and in the struggle that took place between us he knifed me. I am growing weaker every moment. I believe I am dying, Jack. But before I go I must see that you get the chart. It is hidden in the chimney. Put your hand up the flue. You will feel a loose brick at the back. Remove it, and you will find the chart in the back of the hole. Secure it at once. Do as I tell you, Jack. I want to know you have it in your possession before I die."

"I can find the chart any time, captain," sobbed the lad, for he loved the old man and the prospect of his death, in such a sudden and tragic manner, was a terrible shock to him.

"No, no; get it now, Jack. Let me see it in your hand and then I can die satisfied that it is beyond the reach of that scoundrel. Where is he? Has he escaped?"

"No. He is unconscious on the floor."

"The chart, the chart!" cried the skipper, with a frantic kind of eagerness.

Jack saw that it would be necessary to humor him, so he jumped up, stepped over to the chimney, inserted his hand up the flue, removed the loose brick, felt around the aperture until his fingers touched something like a small packet, which he drew forth.

The wounded man watched his movements with feverish interest.

"That's it, Jack," he said in a voice hardly above a whisper. "That's it. Hide it, quick! Hide——"

His head dropped back and the next word died in his throat.

Jack thrust the packet into his pocket and sprang quickly to the captain's side, unconscious that the sailor had recovered his senses and had heard a portion of the wounded man's words.

"He is dead! He is dead!" moaned the boy, noting the pallor on the old man's face and seeing how still and death-like he lay.

Half frantic with grief he felt for the skipper's heart.

To his great joy he noticed that it was still beating, though faintly.

"I must get a doctor at once," he cried. "There isn't a moment to be lost."

Without thinking of the motionless ruffian near the chimney, he dashed out of the room, down the stairs and into the store, where he found Tom Trimble standing with his back against one of the counters waiting for somebody to turn up.

He was much startled by the excited appearance of Jack Dalton.

"What's the matter, Jack? What's happened?"

"Murder is the matter," palpitated Jack.

"Murder!" gasped Tom, turning pale.

"Yes. That sailor came back and has stabbed the captain. I'm going for a doctor as quick as I can. Mind the store, will you, till I get back?"

With those words Jack snatched up his hat and rushed out at the door.

There were two doctors in the village, and the nearest one lived about a quarter of a mile from the store.

Jack made for his house as fast as he could run.

The doctor was in and the boy hurriedly acquainted him with the facts of the case.

The physician agreed with the lad that there was no time to be lost.

He got his emergency bag and accompanied Jack back to the store.

Tom was doing his best to wait on two customers who had come in, and without stopping Jack led the doctor up to Captain Norris's room.

The old skipper lay just as the boy had left him, and Jack was afraid he was past all help.

Jim Crowe was gone.

The physician examined the wound and pronounced it dangerous, but not necessarily fatal.

He washed it with an antiseptic preparation and then carefully bandaged it.

Though the old skipper had lost a good deal of blood, the physician hoped that his rugged constitution would pull him through.

With Jack's assistance he was put to bed, and this had hardly been accomplished when the captain came to his senses.

He was very weak and could not speak above a whisper.

He asked the doctor if there was any hope of his pulling through, and the physician told him that he thought he had a good chance of doing so.

It was arranged that the doctor should send a nurse to attend to Captain Norris, since Jack would have his hands full looking after the store all by himself.

After the physician had departed Jack went downstairs and sent Tom for the constable.

When that official arrived, which he did in a hurry when Tom told him what had happened at the store, Jack put him in possession of all the particulars of the case.

"You say it was a sailor named Jim Crowe who stabbed Captain Norris?" said the constable.

"Yes, sir," answered Jack.

"Describe him, please."

Jack did so, and Tom corroborated the description.

"If the captain is in a critical condition I had better fetch the justice here and have his ante-mortem statement taken."

"Dr. Harper said that he thought he'd pull through owing to his strong constitution."

"Well, Dr. Harper ought to be a good judge of the man's condition. Still, it's well to be on the safe side. I think his statement ought to be taken, anyway. Can I go up and see him?"

Jack said he could, and accompanied the constable to Captain Norris's bedside.

As the old skipper was not in condition to answer questions without weakening himself, the officer concluded to postpone getting his statement for the present.

He went away to start an immediate search for the rascally sailor.

In a short time the nurse came to attend the captain.

When Jack came downstairs again he found Mat Mulford in the store with Tom.

Jack locked up the place and the three boys sat around the stove and talked about the advent of Jim Crowe in the village, and the well-nigh fatal attempt he had made on the captain's life.

Although Jack, having heard the old skipper's story, knew the reason that prompted the villain's desperate act, he did not consider that he ought to explain matters to his companions, though they were his particular friends.

In fact, he could not have made matters clear without telling the story of the chart, and that he did not propose to do.

Tom and Mat were both satisfied that the sailor had a strong grudge against Captain Norris to cause him to make a murderous assault on the old man.

They hazarded a dozen reasons to account for Jim Crowe's animosity against his former commander, but not one came anywhere near hitting the truth.

Jack had little to say on the subject, though his chums plied him with numerous questions, thinking they might get a clue to the mystery through his answers.

In the end they went home as much in the dark as ever.

When Jack went to his room, after looking in on the captain and learning from the nurse that the skipper was resting easily, he lighted his lamp and then, full of boyish curiosity, he took the packet that had caused at least one murder and nearly two, out of his pocket and started to examine it.

Unwrapping an outer covering of several folds of an old newspaper, Jack found a piece of stout paper folded twice.

Opening it out with care, it proved to be about six inches one way by four the other, perfectly regular in its oblong

shape, as though it had been especially prepared for some purpose.

The paper was firm, thick and whole, and seemed like a kind of vellum.

In one or two places it was discolored, and some parts of the writing had faded, as we know that ink will fade in time, yet all the words were so plain that Jack could read them without any study or hesitation.

"Why, this isn't a chart," he said, in some surprise. "It's merely a bit of writing. Let me see what it says."

He held the paper up close to the lamp and read the following, in large, legible handwriting:

"LUCAYOS. Little Key abt 4 Leagues N E Grand Caicos. L. abt 71—16. L. abt 21—30. Big mound close to W end of island. Entrance facing E abt midway N—S. Dig 1 F, N. W."

That was all, and to say the truth it was not very intelligible to Jack.

He was very much disappointed to find that this so-called chart, pointing the way to a pirate's treasure, was, at first sight, at least, little better than so much Greek to him.

It was impossible for him to go to the captain now and ask for an explanation.

That would have to be deferred till the old skipper grew better, if he ever did.

Jack, however, was curious to learn the meaning of the writing as soon as he could, and he thought he would try and see if he could study it out for himself.

He first tackled the word "Lucayos."

"That must be the name of the island," he argued. "It's a little key, or island, about four leagues, that is twelve miles, northeast of Grand Caicos. That's easy enough to read, but what is Grand Caicos?"

He had never heard of such a place as Grand Caicos before, and was inclined to believe that it was a town on some island in the Caribbean Sea.

As Jack believed in doing things methodically, before proceeding further he got his geography, which had a very good map of the West Indies, and opened it up at the proper place.

Starting with the Bahama Islands where they began off the southeastern coast of Florida, he took each one in turn and studied every name printed on the map.

He met with no encouragement till he drew near the end of the group, at a point directly north of Hayti, then his heart gave a great thump when he saw the name N. Caicos attached to a small island, and then right near it a larger island labeled Grand Caicos.

"Why, it's an island!" he exclaimed, with a thrill of satisfaction. "The little key where the treasure is buried is twelve miles northeast of this place."

He studied the location with no little curiosity.

There was no little island marked on the school map.

"I dare say it's down on a regular ship's chart, all right. Probably it's too insignificant to find a place on such a map as this. Now, if it was down on a ship's chart of these waters how is it that Captain Norris failed to find it in two attempts?"

That was a puzzler for Jack.

While he was studying the map before him he noticed a word in small type, enclosed in parentheses, directly under the words "Bahama Islands."

He looked at it closely and saw that it spelled "Lucayos."

Then he understood that Lucayos was the former or original name for the Bahama Islands.

"So that isn't the name of the little island after all. Its presence on the paper means that the little key is one of the Bahama Islands. I'm beginning to understand this writing, after all," he said, gleefully. "I'll bet nine dollars that I'll get at the bottom of it before I'm done."

Having mastered the first part of the writing to his satisfaction, he took up the next sentence, which was a short one, "L. abt 71—16."

It took him about fifteen minutes to translate this into "Longitude, 71 degrees, 16 minutes," west, of course.

Then naturally the next sentence meant "Latitude, 21 degrees, 30 minutes" north.

The next was easy: "Big mound close to the west end of the island."

The next was also simple: "Entrance to the mound faced to the east, about midway north and south."

The last read easily to his way of thinking: "Dig one foot northwest," but still it didn't seem to be quite clear as a definite direction.

Jack decided to write the whole thing down on another piece of paper, so that if by any chance he lost the original he would have a copy that would answer fully as well for all practical purposes.

So he got a clean piece of notepaper and made the following copy:

"Lucayos, or Bahama Islands. The little key (island) about twelve miles northeast of Grand Caicos Island. Longitude about 71 deg. 16 min. Latitude about 21 deg. 30 min. Big mound close to west end of island, entrance to which faces east about midway north and south. Dig one foot, northwest."

"There," said Jack, with a feeling of satisfaction, "I guess I've got it down all right. I'll show it to the captain when he gets better. Perhaps he'll be able to make the last sentence clearer to me."

With those words Jack folded up the copy and placed it in his vest pocket.

At that moment he thought he heard a noise at the window.

Turning his head quickly he saw something that made his heart almost stop beating.

It was the face of Jim Crowe pressed against the glass of one of the lower panes, his baleful eyes glaring full at the boy.

CHAPTER V.

THE HOLDUP AT THE BRIDGE.

For a moment the two stared at each other without moving, Jack fascinated by the basilisk gaze of the murderous rascal, then Jim Crowe lifted his arms to the sash, threw up the window, and proceeded to crawl into the room.

"Stop!" cried Jack.

There was something in the boy's ringing tones that arrested the scoundrel, and he paused with his knee on the sill and his body half through the opening.

Jack looked around for a weapon with which to defend himself, but saw nothing that seemed available for the purpose.

After favoring the boy with a deep scowl Crowe's features relaxed into an ugly kind of grin.

"I'll trouble ye, sonny, for that dockyment ye have in your hand. Hand it over and I won't hurt ye. I came all the way from New York to get it from my old cap'n who wanted to defraud me of it. If he'd acted squarely with his old shipmate he wouldn't have got hurt."

"What do you want with it?" asked Jack, to gain time to think.

"That's my business, sonny. That there dockyment belongs to me. The cap'n hadn't no right to keep me out of it. I've been huntin' for him ten years to get it back. Now he thought to fool me by givin' it to you. But I was too sharp for him. P'haps ye don't know the danger of holdin' on to that there chart. Then I'll tell ye. What happened to the cap'n happened to another man twelve years ago, and it's likely to happen to ye if ye don't turn it over to me. Possesshun may be nine p'int of the law, but the p'int of a knife is a more powerful argyment than all the law in the world. So hand it over if ye would save your skin."

"Never!" cried Jack, desperately.

"Then I'm sorry for ye, sonny," replied Crowe, with an evil grin. "I ain't got nothin' ag'in ye 'cept your objection to part with that chart. Since I've made up my mind to get it, no matter what the risk, I'm thinkin' ye'll have to give it up whether ye have a mind to or not."

With the ability of a cat he made a sudden leap into the room.

As he did so, Jack snatched the lamp from the bracket and threw it full at him.

It struck him square in the chest.

The chimney broke into a score of pieces, the flame of the wick flared up, igniting his flannel shirt front, which was spattered with oil, and in another moment his chest was a mass of flame.

As the lamp fell to the floor and rolled on its side, the wick still alight, Jim Crowe uttered a wild yell of rage and terror, and began beating out the fire that was fast enveloping his shirt.

Jack, who was worked up to a high pitch of excitement, sprang at him and struck him a heavy blow in the face.

The sailor staggered back and fell out of the window.

He would probably have broken his neck by the fall but for the fact that his body landed upon the ladder by which he had ascended, and one of his arms passing through an upper rung arrested his downward progress enough to save him.

After hanging for a moment in midair he slid to the ground, landing in a heap at the foot and rolling over on his face.

The grass extinguished the fire and he lay for some minutes thoroughly dazed.

Jack snatched up the lamp and held the flame above his

head, looking down at him, until he felt a hand on his shoulder, and turning around saw the nurse looking at him with a startled face.

"What's the matter?" the old woman asked.

"The rascal who stabbed the captain was in this room. I threw the lamp at him and he tumbled out of the window. There he is now at the foot of the ladder. We must secure him before he can recover and get away."

The ladder had been dislodged so that it was out of the boy's reach.

"Come," said Jack, "we must go downstairs and out the back way."

Thrusting the chart, which he had held in his left hand all the time, into his pocket, he rushed from the room, down the stairs and into the store.

Reaching for several pieces of short line that hung from a hook on the wall, he opened the back door and sprang outside.

But when he ran around the corner of the building he was only in time to see the figure of the sailor vanishing into the gloom.

"Too late!" he muttered in a tone of disappointment. "I thought I had him."

Satisfied that it was dangerous as well as useless to pursue Jim Crowe, he carried the ladder into the store, made the door fast again, and returned upstairs.

The nurse, who had not followed him, evidently wanted an explanation, and Jack told her as much as he thought necessary.

When she retired he got a hammer and some nails and secured his window so that it could not be opened again.

Then, confident that the rascal would hardly pay him another visit that night, he undressed himself and went to bed.

He was up as usual with the sun, which rose about a quarter to six, and his first thought was of Jim Crowe, and next of the precious chart.

Looking out of the window he saw by the rumpled grass and patches of kicked-up earth where the rascal had fallen, and perhaps Jack half wished that the scoundrel had broken his neck, for he richly deserved such a fate.

After making his toilet, the boy went in to see how the captain was getting on, and was pleased to learn that he was no worse, and perhaps a trifle better.

Then he went into the kitchen, lit the fire in the stove and started to get breakfast for himself and the nurse.

While thus engaged his thoughts were busy with the chart.

He realized that from now on, unless the rascal was arrested and sent to the State's prison for his latest crime, Jim Crowe would shadow him with the same dogged perseverance with which he had hunted for Captain Norris.

As long as the villain believed the chart to be in his possession he would be in danger of an unexpected attack, the consequences of which were not cheerful to think of.

His only real safety lay in the capture of the sailor by the village authorities, and he determined to spur them up that morning with the story of his last night's adventure.

Jack regarded the chart as a kind of sacred trust given him by the captain for his future advantage, and he determined, be the risk what it might, that Jim Crowe should never get it into his clutches.

"Where shall I hide it?" he said to himself. "I think its original resting place in the chimney of the captain's room is the best place for it. I'll put it up at the first chance I get. In the meanwhile it's hardly safe to carry it about with me. That scoundrel may lie in wait for me when I go for the mail this afternoon. I think I'll get Mat or Tom to go with me for the next few days as a kind of protection. He might think twice before attacking the two of us. At any rate, an ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure."

After thinking of several places to hide the chart for the time being, Jack, loath to let it out of his reach, finally decided to stow it between the sole of his stocking and his foot.

So, wrapping it up in a piece of brown paper, he soon had it out of sight.

After a hasty breakfast he opened the store and made a fresh fire in the stove.

Customers began to drop in and ask about Captain Norris, and by and by the doctor came to visit the captain.

When he came downstairs he told Jack that the wound was not as bad as he had at first supposed it to be, and that Captain Norris, with proper care, would recover.

Jack was very glad to hear this good report, and he began to feel light-hearted once more, in spite of the fact that Jim Crowe was secreted somewhere in the neighborhood.

The constable came in to learn how the captain was getting on, and Jack told him what the physician said.

"That's good," said the officer. "My two deputies are out looking for that rascal and I am in hopes of landing him in the lockup to-day."

Then Jack astonished him with the account of his last night's encounter with the sailor.

"The rascal must have it in for the captain hard," said the constable, thinking that Crowe had returned for the purpose of finishing his victim.

Jack didn't undeceive him, as to do so would call for an explanation which he didn't care to make.

After school Tom Trimble dropped into the store to see Jack and find out how the captain was.

"If you haven't anything better to do, Tom, I wish you'd go with me for the mail by and by," said Jack.

"All right," replied Tom, "I'm with you. How about the store?"

"I'm going to lock up while I'm away."

"I suppose you've had a good many visitors to-day," said Tom.

"Yes. You'd think half the village was here off and on to ask about Captain Norris. He's very popular with the people, and they are all sorry to hear of the attack made upon him by the sailor."

"The fellow hasn't been arrested yet, has he?"

"Not to my knowledge. I guess he's as cunning as an old fox, and will be hard to catch. What do you think? He had the nerve to come back here after you and Mat left last night."

"You don't mean it!" exclaimed Tom, clearly astonished.

"I do mean it," and Jack told his friend all the particulars of Crowe's visit, except that part relating to the chart.

That gave Tom the same idea that the constable had, that the sailor had returned to finish the captain.

When the time came for Jack to go to the station for the mail he left Tom to look after the store while he went to the barn to hitch up the light wagon.

He found Mat Mulford in the store when he drove around in front.

Mat wanted to go to the station, too.

"You can go, but there isn't room on the seat for three," said Jack.

"What's the matter with putting a box in and I'll sit behind you?" said Mat.

There was no objection to this arrangement, and it was carried out.

About half-way to the station the road led through a wood where a narrow stream, connecting with Great South Bay, was crossed by a bridge.

It was at this point that, had he been alone, Jack would have feared an ambush on the part of Jim Crowe, as it offered many advantages for such a thing owing to the dense shrubbery that grew along the road.

Now that he had two stout companions with him the store boy was not troubled with any apprehensions on the subject.

"Hello!" exclaimed Tom, when they reached the bridge, pointing at a rusty-looking sloop lying half hidden among the rushes, "whose craft is that, and where did it come from?"

"Give it up," replied Jack. "I saw it there yesterday afternoon when I passed here."

"You don't suppose that it belongs to that sailor, do you?" said Tom.

This suggestion rather startled Jack, and he looked hard at the lonesome-looking and apparently deserted craft as they drove slowly across the bridge.

"Well, it might," replied Jack, as he started the mare into a trot.

"Then we'd better put the constable on to it when we get back," said Mat.

"There wouldn't be any harm in you doing so on your way home," replied Jack.

They reached the station a few minutes before the train was due and hitched the horse to a tree while they all went on the platform.

"Hello, Jack," said the station agent. "You'll have some time to wait for your mail-pouch."

"How is that?" asked the boy in surprise.

"The train will be late. There's been a washout down near Carlineville and traffic both ways is held up."

"You don't say! How long do you suppose I'll have to wait?"

"I couldn't tell you, but I guess some time."

This wasn't particularly pleasant news for the boys, but they had to make the best of it, since it was Jack's duty to wait for the mail, even if it took several hours.

So they proceeded to kill time as best they could.

It was something over two hours before the train pulled in at the station.

Jack shoved the outgoing pouch aboard the mail car and received the one containing the mail for Blueville.

He tumbled it into the wagon, as his companions got in, Mat taking Tom's place on the seat for the return trip.

Unhitching the mare, Jack climbed up and started for the village.

He whipped up the horse, as he was anxious to get back to the store.

It was dark before they reached the wood, and Jack kept his eyes skinned when they entered it.

He hardly expected to encounter Jim Crowe, but deemed it prudent to keep on the lookout.

They struck the bridge at a good clip and were dashing across it when the mare fetched up as if she had hit a stone wall.

A stout rope stretched across the further end of the bridge was the cause of her sudden stoppage.

The shock toppled Mat and Jack backward off the seat, and sent Tom and the box floundering in the bottom of the wagon.

A stalwart figure darted out of the bushes, climbed into the wagon, and singling Jack out, yanked him from the vehicle, half-dazed as he was, and dragged him away.

CHAPTER VI.

IN THE HANDS OF JIM CROWE.

It didn't take Jack many moments to realize that he was in the clutches of a powerful man, and though he couldn't see the fellow's face in the darkness he knew that it must be Jim Crowe who had trapped him.

He put up a desperate struggle to get free, but the rascally sailor was twice as strong as he was, and paid little attention to his efforts.

He had a strangle-hold on the boy, and Jack, seeing that the scoundrel had him dead to rights, began shouting for help, hoping that Tom and Mat would come to his rescue.

Jim Crowe crashed down through the bushes toward the stream, dragging the boy with him.

He was aiming for the rusty black sloop, moored to the stump of a tree by a slip-knot, such as sailors know how to make.

In the meantime Tom and Mat pulled themselves together and stood up in the stalled wagon.

"What the dickens did we run against?" asked Mat, rubbing a lump on the back of his head. "One would think we'd struck a fence from the way we fetched up. The road seems clear enough as far as I can see."

"Ask me something easier, Mat," replied Tom, with a rueful grimace, not apparent in the gloom. "Blamed if I know what we struck, though I'll swear I hit the bottom of the wagon hard enough to put a hole through it."

"Where's Jack?" asked Mat.

"I don't know where he is. I guess he's looking for the obstruction."

"Help! Tom! Mat! Help!" came the voice of Jack at that moment.

"Hello!" said Mat. "There's Jack's voice now. He's in some trouble and is shouting for us. Come on, let's see what's the trouble."

Both boys leaped from the wagon, slipped past the horse and then fetched up against the rope which had stopped the mare.

It took them both across their necks, and they went down like a couple of tenpins.

"Great Scott!" gasped Mat. "What was that?"

"That's what I want to know," gurgled Tom. "Something hit me across the throat. I won't be able to swallow for a week."

They struggled on their feet only to go down again, as their heads this time came in sudden contact with the rope.

"Suffering Egypt! Is the road bewitched?" roared Mat.

"Gee whiz! There's something doing that's mighty mysterious."

"Help! Help! Help!" shouted the half-strangled Jack, as Crowe yanked him through the bushes.

The two boys got up more carefully and then saw what had upset them.

"Why, it's a rope stretched across the end of the bridge!" said Mat, in some astonishment. "That's what stopped the horse and played the deuce with all of us. Who could have put it there, and what for?"

"Mat! Tom! Help!" came again from Jack.

"Jack is certainly in some trouble down near the creek," said Mat. "Maybe he is stuck in the mud and water. Come on," and he started off in the direction of the hail.

"What could have taken him down there?" asked Tom, as he followed his companion.

"How do I know? He's there, at any rate, and he's calling for us to help him out of some scrape."

The boys said nothing more, but made all haste to reach their hapless companion.

They struggled through the bushes in the darkness, half afraid that they might find themselves in the mire and water before they knew where they were.

"Help! Help!" shouted Jack, not far away.

"Shut up, ye infernal young sculpin, or I'll choke the wind out of ye!" came a second and decidedly hoarse voice to their ears.

Tom and Mat recognized the tones as belonging to Jim Crowe, the murderous sailor, and they both came to a sudden halt.

"It's the rascal who stabbed Captain Norris," said Tom, in a tremulous whisper.

"I know it is," returned Mat. "He's got hold of Jack and Lord knows what he means to do to him."

"What shall we do?" palpitated Tom, who had a terrified vision of a knife coming his way in the darkness, if he and his companion went too far.

"Do!" cried Mat, who was full of spunk. "We've got to help Jack out. We can't desert him when he's in trouble."

"But, suppose——"

"Suppose nothing! Come on," and he dashed forward. Tom followed, ashamed to hold back.

He was not wanting in courage, but the reputation the sailor had already made in the village had its effect on him.

The two lads reached the edge of the creek where the sloop lay just as Crowe had thrust Jack into the cabin, and shut the door on him.

He was hastening to slip the moorings when Mat, followed by Tom, came piling over the bows of the craft.

"Hi, there, you rascal, what are you doing with Jack Dalton?" demanded Mat, advancing aft with a stout stick in his hand.

Jim Crowe was a bit staggered by their unexpected appearance.

He hurled an imprecation at them, and ordered them off the sloop.

"We don't go without Jack," replied Mat, resolutely. "What have you done with him?"

"None of your blamed business, ye young monkey. Get ashore, both of ye!"

"Not on your life, Jim Crowe. We're not afraid of you. We want Jack and we're going to have him."

"Ye are, eh?" snarled the sailor. "I'll see if ye are!" He rushed at the boys.

If he had his knife about him he disdained to use it on the lads, whom he expected to crush with his ponderous, hairy fists, which were like a couple of sledge hammers.

Mat aimed a blow at his head.

The sailor saw the stick coming, and throwing up his arm grabbed it as it descended.

With a jerk he yanked the brave boy toward him, struck him in the face, and tumbled him down the short stairway leading to the cabin.

Then he sprang at Tom, snatched the stick from his grasp, and grabbing him bodily, threw him on top of Mat.

The two boys were thus placed hors du combat in no time at all.

Jim Crowe slipped his mooring rope, hoisted the jib and then the mainsail, made the sheets fast, and went to the helm as the sloop gathered way and pointed her nose down the creek in the direction of Great South Bay.

The wind was light and the little craft didn't make very rapid progress.

The sailor secured the tiller so that the sloop would hold her course steadily down the creek, and then, with a couple of pieces of rope in his hand, he went forward to where Tom and Mat were just recovering from the effects of their encounter with him.

He reached down, and seizing Tom, hauled him up on the deck, where, in spite of his struggles, he bound his hands behind his back.

Mat was not so easy a victim, and Crowe had to handle him pretty roughly before he could render him as harmless as his companion.

"Now, ye pair of sculpins, see what ye get by buttin' in where ye ain't got no business. Lie there, both of ye, till I make up my mind whether I'll feed ye to the fishes or put ye ashore somewhere along the Sound."

Having said his say, Jim Crowe returned to the tiller and proceeded to guide the sloop down the creek to the point where it connected with the Bay.

CHAPTER VII.

THE SECRET OF THE CHART.

In the course of twenty minutes the little vessel was in Great South Bay, with her head to the west.

Crowe once more secured the helm, and then went to the door of the cabin, which he unfastened and entered.

A dim light from a swinging lantern partially dispelled the gloom, and showed the figure of Jack Dalton stretched out on the floor with his hands and feet bound.

"Now, you son of a sea cook, I'm goin' to 'tend to your

case," said the sailor, with an evil leer. "Ye nearly done me up last night, so ye can't complain if I fix ye for keeps now that I have ye in my power. First of all, I'm goin' to see if ye have that chart about ye. If so, p'raps I'll let up on ye."

He began a close search of Jack's clothes.

From his vest pocket he drew forth the copy the boy had made of the vellum document.

The rascal took down the lantern and examined it.

"So that's what I saw ye doin' last night—copyin' the chart," he said, with a sarcastic grin. "Well, ye kin have it back. It's no good to me, no more'n the chart was to my old cap'n. The man who gave it to him didn't tell him the real secret of the paper. So he followed the writin' and went on a wild goose chase. Ye kin do the same if ye ever get the chance. I know how to get the real meanin' out of that there dockyment. The chap told me while he was three sheets in the wind, and but for my old cap'n buttin' in I'd have been livin' in clover these twelve years. However, I reckon it ain't too late yet, pervided I get the chart, and I mean to get it if I have to go back to the village and s'arch the cap'n's house from cellar to roof. Ye've either got it about ye or ye've hidden it. If ye haven't it in your clothes ye'll tell me where ye've hidden it or it'll be wuss for ye."

While Jim Crowe was talking he was searching Jack's garments, and feeling every inch of the cloth of his jacket and his vest to see if he'd sewed it into the lining.

Jack maintained a dogged silence, hoping that the rascal would not think of searching his right stocking.

As he met with nothing but disappointment the fellow's temper grew steadily worse.

Finally he pulled off Jack's shoes and looked into both of them.

The boy's heart jumped into his mouth, for he expected nothing else but that his stockings would come off next, and then the chart would come to light.

As cunning as the rascal was he didn't suspect the real hiding place of the chart, much to Jack's relief.

The sailor made a second and more careful search of his prisoner's garments, and as he didn't find what he was after, he gave up the quest, fully satisfied that the boy had hidden the paper somewhere about the captain's house.

"I see ye haven't got it," he said, with an ugly scowl. "Well, ye'll tell me where ye've hid it or I'll make ye wish ye'd never been born. Come, out with it! What have ye done with it?"

"You won't find out from me," replied Jack, firmly.

"Won't I? I'll see if I won't. When a bird won't sing he must be made to. I reckon I kin make ye warble afore I get through with ye."

Crowe got a piece of rope and tied Jack's right leg to one of the legs of the small stationary table.

Then he took down the lantern, opened it and took out the lamp.

"Now, sonny, ye gave me a taste of fire last night, and ye knocked me out of the winder on top of it," he said, with a villainous scowl. "I'm goin' to let ye taste of fire to-night, jest to see how ye'll like it yourself."

"You scoundrel!" groaned Jack, who realized what the sailor was up to.

"That's right, sonny. Spit it out," chuckled Crowe. "I

ain't got no objecshun to you callin' me all the names that ye kin think of if it will do ye any good. I reckon this here applicashun to your bare skin'll make ye tell where ye've hid the chart. I've seen stubbornner chaps than ye come to the scratch when fire was brought ag'in the soles of their feet."

With another crafty chuckle he began pulling Jack's stocking off.

"Hello, sonny! What have ye got in your stockin'? Blamed if I don't believe it's the chart," he added, shaking the little packet out in his hand.

It took him but fifteen seconds to assure himself that such was the fact.

"Ye are more clever than I took ye to be," he said, with a satisfied chuckle. "And I never thought that it was in your stockin'. That saves ye from a scorchin', sonny. I reckon ye have got off easy. This here chart wouldn't have done ye no more good than it did the cap'n. He hunted for that there key accordin' to direcshuns, and he didn't find it, though the latitude and longitude is writ down here as plain as daylight, till it would seem jest like plain sailin' to go to that there island. Ye've got a copy of it in your pocket, which ye kin keep, and go huntin' for it on your own hook some day if ye've a mind to. But ye might sail around that there Grand Caicos till ye was gray-headed and ye wouldn't find no little key, leastaway not the little key where the gold is buried. P'raps ye don't believe me? I'll jest show ye. Ye kin go back to the cap'n then and tell him how he failed to find the island. This here writin' ain't the keyrect direcshun. It was put there to fool any one what hadn't no right to the chart. The chap that give it to my old cap'n forgot, or didn't want to give the secret away to him. But he gave it away to me when his brains was thick with licker. Now, look at the back of that there chart. Ye don't see no writin' on it, do ye?" he grinned.

The rascal held the vellum against the hot glass of the lantern chimney for a few minutes.

When he took it away it was no longer blank, but covered with a faded kind of writing.

"There ye are. There's the keyrect latitude and longitude, which ain't near Grand Caicos at all, but near another island 250 miles or more from it. Now ye understand why the cap'n couldn't find the little key. He was huntin' in the wrong place for it. When ye see him ag'in ye kin tell him all about it. Ye see now that that there copy ye made ain't worth the paper it's writ on, so ye're welcome to keep it. Ye made the marks out mighty well, considerin' ye ain't no sailor. The only mistake ye made was ye writ down 'dig one foot northwest.' That there 'F' don't stand for feet, but for fathom, which is six feet. Since ye'll never see the mound on the treasure key I don't mind givin' ye that piece of informashun. It might do ye some good if ye ever should find another treasure chart with that there letter in it."

The last sentence he spoke ironically, for he knew there wasn't much chance of Jack ever getting hold of another chart like the one he held in his hand.

Jim Crowe folded up the chart, from which the characters traced in sympathetic ink on the back of it had already faded away, and put it carefully in his pocket.

Then he released the boy's leg from the table leg, re-

turned the lantern to the hook where it had swung before, and went on deck.

Jack lay still and thought over what had just happened.

He was staggered by the strange revelation of the real secret of the chart.

No wonder Captain Norris had failed to discover the little island where the treasure was buried.

"That rascal seems to be the only one after all that the chart was any good to," he muttered, "for he alone knew about the secret writing on the back of the paper. The captain will be wild when I tell him about it, and how the villain got the chart away from me. It seems strange that fate should play into the hands of such a scoundrel. But it has, and that's all there is to it. I wonder what he'll do with me now? Land me somewhere along shore and then sail for the island, I suppose; that is, if he's got grub enough aboard to last him for the trip and the time he expects to remain on the key. He must be something of a navigator if he hopes to reach the latitude and longitude where the island is. Most sailors like him couldn't do it no more than they could fly, even if they had spent the most of their lives at sea. He'll have to have a quadrant, and be able to use it, and then be able to figure out his position on a regular chart of the Caribbean waters. I never would imagine that he knew enough to do that. Maybe he means to take a navigator as partner with him. He could do that all right, if he's willing to divide the treasure on any reasonable basis. At any rate I'm out of it, which is pretty hard luck. In fact, I never was in it. Neither was Captain Norris. The secret writing on the back of the chart seems to be the key of the whole thing. Neither the captain nor I would probably have ever learned of its existence, and consequently the chart would have been valueless to us."

Such was the tenor of Jack's thoughts as he lay helpless on the floor of the cabin.

He was not aware that Tom and Mat were also prisoners on board the sloop, though he had heard the rumpus on deck before the sailor slipped his moorings in the creek.

About all he knew was that the little craft was out on Great South Bay, and that the water was not rough.

CHAPTER VIII.

LOST IN THE FOG.

For an hour or so longer the sloop sailed along and then Jim Crowe ran her close in to a small island just north of Fire Island, which forms part of the narrow strip of shore marking the southern boundary of Great South Bay.

A short distance away was a channel connecting the bay with the great ocean outside.

It ran between Oak Island and Fire Island, and at the extreme point of the former flashed the Oak Light.

The sailor stepped ashore and secured the sloop to a large stone.

Then he returned on board.

"Now, you young shavers," he said to Tom Trimble and Mat Mulford, "I'm goin' to let ye go, and your friend with ye. So get up and jump on to the beach while I fetch t'other chap out of the cabin."

"Aren't you going to cut our arms loose?" asked Mat.

"Your friend Jack kin do that for ye. Now, vamoze!"

Tom and Mat obeyed the order, and lined up on the shore waiting for Jack to join them.

Presently Jack walked out of the cabin followed by the sailor.

Without a word he stepped on the beach.

As soon as he did so, Crowe slipped the mooring rope, and the sloop drifted off till the wind filled her sails, and then the sailor headed her for the channel.

"Good-bye, sonny," he said, in great good humor. "I'm obleeged to ye for bringin' me that there chart. Maybe I'll remember ye in my last will and testament. Tell my old cap'n that I'm sorry I did him up, but I reckon he's too tough a knot to turn up his foes easily. Tell him that me and the gold will soon be on good terms."

The rascal took off his hat, waved it ironically, and was soon lost in the gloom of the night.

The boys looked after the receding sloop as long as it remained a blot on the water, and then they looked at each other.

"Cut us loose, Jack," said Mat.

"All right," replied Dalton, whipping out his knife and beginning on Mat's bonds. "I didn't know you fellows were aboard until that scoundrel released me from the cabin. How did it happen that he carried you and Tom off?"

Mat explained how it came about.

"Well, I'm much obliged to you both for trying to help me, but Jim Crowe is a mighty tough proposition, and I don't wonder that he did the two of you up," said Jack, cutting Tom free of his fetters.

"Where the dickens are we now?" said Tom, looking around in the darkness.

"Somewhere along the south shore of Great South Bay, I should judge," replied Jack.

"How are we going to get back home? We can't walk across the bay."

There was no doubt about that fact, and the three boys gazed blankly at each other.

"I wouldn't care so much if it wasn't that the horse and wagon with the mail-pouch was left standing on the bridge," said Jack. "Then the captain being under the weather, too, with the nurse waiting for me to get back, is rather tough."

The boys started to walk slowly eastward while they canvassed the situation.

In about fifteen minutes they arrived near the end of the island.

Suddenly Tom gave a shout and rushed down to the water's edge.

"Here's a boat, fellows," he cried, joyfully. "There's a pair of oars in her. We can row back to the north shore, and then we'll be able to walk to the village."

Luck had evidently run in their favor, and Jack and Mat were just as pleased as Tom was over the discovery of the boat.

Jack struck a match and examined the little craft.

The first thing he saw was a fine shotgun lying across the seats.

Then there was a hamper forward which looked as if it contained provisions.

"This craft belongs to some sportsman who was out

shooting. It must have slipped its moorings and floated away, leaving him marooned somewhere along shore. One person's misfortune is often another person's good luck," said Jack.

"Let's see what's in the hamper," said Mat. "Looks to me as if it was grub. If it is it's mighty welcome, for I'm so hungry I could chew a tenpenny nail."

"Me, too," chimed in Tom, his mouth watering at the prospect of food.

They examined the hamper and found it stuffed with sandwiches, a whole pie and a quart bottle of milk.

"Oh, my!" cried Tom. "Do we have supper or don't we?"

"I'll put it to a vote," grinned Jack. "Those in favor of eating this grub will say 'aye.'"

Mat and Tom yelled "Aye" at once.

"The motion is carried unanimously. We'll proceed to eat, and then we'll row across the bay, each of us taking his turn at the oars."

There wasn't much left in the hamper when they finished their meal, and the milk bottle was empty.

While they were eating a fog had been slowly coming in from the ocean.

When they pushed off for the north shore of the bay Jack remarked that it looked misty.

Before they had gone a quarter of a mile the fog rolled around the flatboat and its three occupants, and they soon lost all track of their surroundings.

"We're liable to be lost on the bay all night if this fog doesn't blow away," remarked Jack, a bit anxiously.

"There doesn't seem to be any wind to blow it away," said Mat. "It's almost calm."

They kept on rowing by turns, unconscious that the outgoing tide had gradually worked the head of the boat around and that they were being carried both by the tide and the action of their oars toward the channel at the eastern end of Fire Island.

Believing that they were still heading for the northern shore, while in point of fact they were proceeding in the opposite direction, they worked hard to get across the big bay.

"I wonder how close we are to the shore?" said Mat, at last. "I'm about played out."

"I'm done up, too," said Tom, though he hadn't been working the oars for half an hour.

"I'll relieve you, Mat," said Jack, and the other was glad to let him do it.

Jack rowed steadily for about twenty minutes, and then stopped to rest.

"We ought to be nearly across," he said. "We've been rowing for more than two hours, I should judge."

"Seems more like four hours," growled Mat. "How far is it across from the south shore?"

"From three to five miles at this point, I should think," replied Jack.

"I'll bet we've rowed all of five miles," said Tom.

"We've rowed enough to be over, I'll swear," asserted Mat.

To say the truth, they had, for at that moment the boat was already three miles out in the Atlantic, south of Long Island.

Had the boys dreamed of the seriousness of their situation they probably would have had a fit.

Jack resumed his rowing, expecting every moment to hit the shore.

But though he worked his best in order to bring their trip to a speedy conclusion, they met with nothing in the shape of land.

"I'll bet we've got turned around in this fog," said Jack, resting on the oars, "and are rowing either up or down the bay. If we are we might as well quit and wait till the fog lifts, for the bay is all of thirty miles long, and as we were in about the middle of it when we started, we'd have a mighty big job on our hands trying to reach either end. Besides, it would take us greatly out of our way."

"That's cheerful—I don't think," grumbled Mat. "The fog may not lift all night, and we'd have to float around till morning."

"We can keep on awhile longer," replied Jack. "If we don't strike shore in fifteen minutes we may know that we're off our course."

Tom reluctantly took the oars, but he worked like a person who had little heart in the job.

His arms were tired and sore, and he was feeling decidedly glum.

"What's the use?" he said after ten minutes' exercise. "We're in for it, so we might just as well float till we can see where we are."

Accordingly the oars were taken in and no more rowing was done.

At that moment they were nearly five miles south of Long Island, and getting further out to sea every minute.

They talked together for an hour longer and then they began to grow sleepy.

Tom dropped off first, then Mat followed his example, and finally Jack, having no one to speak to, commenced to doze.

And while they slept the boat continued to increase her distance from the shores of their native country, the fog gradually drifted away, and the wind began to blow a gentle breeze.

Under a clear, star-lit sky, the flatboat floated softly upon the bosom of the mighty deep with its freight of three sleeping boys, two of whom were probably dreaming of home at that moment, while Jack's slumber was disturbed with disquieting visions in which Jim Crowe largely figured.

CHAPTER IX.

SHIPWRECKED.

When the first rays of the rising sun struck Jack in the face he awoke with a start, rubbed his eyes and looked around him.

He saw nothing but an unlimited stretch of water in whatever direction he gazed.

He gaped dumfounded at the sea and sky, and began to wonder if he really was awake.

"Where in thunder have we got to?" he asked himself, thoroughly bewildered by the situation.

At that moment Mat awoke, and in stirring his legs he kicked Tom, and he awoke, also.

They, too, looked around and saw the same picture Jack was surveying.

"Great jawbones! What does this mean?" gasped Mat.

"Suffering sixpence! Where are we?" palpitated Tom. By that time Jack had realized their terrible plight.

"We're out at sea," he replied, in a solemn tone.

"Out at sea!" ejaculated Mat, his heart rising into his throat.

"Out at sea!" gurgled Tom, turning pale.

"Yes, fellows. We're out on the Atlantic. That fog last night did us up."

"Oh, lord! What will become of us?" asked Tom.

"I give it up," replied Jack, feeling pretty blue.

"Can't you see the Long Island coast?" asked Mat.

"No, I can't see anything but water and sky."

"Gee! But we're in a fine fix now," said Mat. "With nothing to eat or drink we'll starve to death pretty soon."

"We may be picked up by some vessel," said Jack. "We should be right in the track of ships and steamers bound in for New York."

"If it should come on to blow hard before we were picked up we'd all be drowned," said Tom.

"No fear of it doing that for some hours, from the looks of things," replied Jack, encouragingly.

There were three sandwiches left in the hamper, and the boys each ate one.

They had nothing to wash them down with, and as morning grew apace they became quite thirsty.

They saw several sails pass in the distance, and about eleven o'clock a big steamer hove in sight.

She did not come near enough to observe the little boat, floating like a speck on the surface of the ocean.

So time passed away, afternoon came and the boys became ravenously hungry.

They grew discouraged, too, and lolled about the boat as if they didn't care whether school kept or not.

After the lapse of an hour Jack sat up and looked around.

He gave a shout that attracted the attention of his companions.

They looked eagerly in the direction he pointed.

A large schooner was bearing down upon them.

In about half an hour the schooner was close to them and they were sighted as they rowed toward her.

They were received aboard and the boat was allowed to go adrift.

Jack, acting as spokesman, told their story of how they got lost in the fog on Great South Bay the previous night, and how they found themselves at sea that morning, with only three sandwiches between them and starvation.

They learned that the schooner was a fruiter, bound from New York to Santiago de Cuba.

The captain said he'd have to carry them to Cuba, and if they would make themselves useful in helping to load the vessel at Santiago he would be willing to bring them back to New York City, whence they could easily reach Blueville in a couple of hours.

The cook got a meal for them, and it tasted better than anything they'd ever eaten before—at least they said it did.

The boys turned in that night feeling like fighting cocks, but as the weather changed for the worse during the night they awoke in the morning dreadfully seasick.

They remained under hatches several days as miserable as three mortals could well be, for a terrific gale was blowing, and the vessel pitched and rolled in the heavy seas in a way that was very trying to them.

On the sixth day the weather was, if anything, worse than ever, and they didn't show their noses on deck, nor evince any interest whatever in life.

They heard a strange clanging noise on deck, which went on for a time.

Finally a sailor came down into the contracted fore-castle where they were huddled together and ordered them on deck to help work the pump, as the schooner was leaking badly.

They didn't feel much like doing this in their condition, but there was no help for it, and on deck they had to go.

The exercise had one advantage—it cured them of their illness, and they soon forgot that they had been seasick.

They passed a tough night, about two-thirds of their time being spent at the pump.

The schooner only carried five hands, and three of these were swept overboard by a giant wave before daylight and lost.

Just at daylight, when the gale appeared to be breaking, a long, low island was discovered right ahead.

At that critical moment the rudder was rendered useless by a heavy wave, and the schooner drifted broadside on to the land.

There was no hope now of averting the threatened disaster, and everybody looked after his own safety.

Ten minutes later the vessel struck on a submerged rock a short distance from the island, and all hands found themselves in the water fighting for their lives.

The three boys seemed to have the least chance of escaping the swirling sea, and yet, as the sequel proved, they were the only ones that reached the shore alive.

They were cast up on the beach, one by one, rolled over and over like pebbles, and finally left by the receding water.

There they lay unconscious for some time, in the midst of the wreckage of the fruiter.

The clouds broke up and fled before the beams of the morning sun, whose rays in time warmed the boys back to life.

Jack was the first to recover consciousness.

He sat up in the sand and looked around him in a dazed way.

Behind him, and as far as he could see in either direction, was a dense mass of tropical vegetation, with here and there groves of plantains, and many single palms.

In front of him was the surf-lined shore, the tumultuous ocean, and the rising sun.

On his right was the motionless form of Tom Trimble, while on his left Mat Mulford lay with face almost buried in the sand.

Around them were broken planks, pieces of rope, like creeping snakes, and the remains of one boat.

Jack crawled to Mat and turned him over on his back.

His first impression was that Mulford was dead, but he soon saw that he was not.

Mat made several convulsive movements with his hands and feet, as though he thought he was in the water and was making an effort to swim, then he opened his eyes.

He stared up at Jack, recognized him and sat up.

"Hello! Where are we, anyway?"

"Washed ashore," replied Jack.

"Where's Tom?"

"Yonder; but I don't know whether he's alive or dead. I'm going to see."

As Jack spoke Tom moved, rolled over on his face, then on his back again, and finally scrambled on his feet.

"Hi, Tom!" said Jack. "I see you're still in the land of the living. Come over here."

Tom walked over to his two friends.

"Where's the schooner?" he asked, looking across the agitated waves.

"Gone to the bottom," replied Jack. "There's a spar belonging to her coming ashore yonder."

"Where is the captain and the two men?"

"I'm afraid they're gone, too."

"Are we the only ones who escaped?"

"Looks very like it."

"Where do you suppose we are?"

"On some island."

"I hope it's inhabited," said Tom, "so that we can get something to eat. We haven't had a square meal since the afternoon we were taken aboard the schooner."

"Let's start ahead, then, and see if we can find any of the inhabitants. We'll walk up on that ridge where those palms are growing. Perhaps we'll be able to see something from there—a house, maybe."

Jack's suggestion was adopted and the boys started for the ridge.

It was only a short walk and they were soon standing among the scattered palms.

The view they obtained was not particularly encouraging.

They saw a sloping stretch of tropical vegetation running down to the ocean on the other side of the island.

At the most the land was only about a quarter of a mile wide at that point.

There wasn't the least sign of human habitation anywhere within range of their eyes.

The island seemed to be long and narrow, pointing east and west.

Dense foliage cut off their view westward, and a grove of trees intercepted their vision in the opposite direction.

"Looks to me as if the island were not inhabited," said Jack; "but, still, you can't tell. There might be a village on the other side of that grove for all we know."

"Then we'd better push through the grove," said Mat. "No good standing here. I hope we find somebody, for it would be fierce to be all alone on this island."

Jack and Tom agreed with him, and the party made for the grove.

They were within a few yards of it when suddenly a young and pretty white girl came out from among the trees and faced them.

CHAPTER X.

COMPANIONS IN MISFORTUNE.

The meeting was clearly a surprise to both parties, particularly to the girl.

She uttered an exclamation of astonishment and seemed about to retreat when Jack spoke:

"Don't run away, miss," he said. "We've just been shipwrecked on this island, and are about half-starved. Is there a village near by?"

"Shipwrecked!" exclaimed the girl, regarding them now with great interest.

"Yes. The schooner we were aboard was caught in a big storm and struck on some rocks out yonder this morning before sunrise. We're the only ones that escaped."

"How unfortunate!" cried the girl, regarding the stalwart, good-looking Jack with some admiration. "Well, come with me. I'll take you to our dwelling place where my father is. We're the only ones on this island."

"The only ones—you and your father?" ejaculated Jack.

"Yes. Our sloop-yacht was driven ashore here in a terrible gale about three months ago, and we've been living here ever since."

"You don't say. And you haven't been able to get away?"

"No. We've only seen a few vessels in that time, and they were too far away for us to signal."

"How have you managed to live?" asked Jack, curiously.

"By the most wonderful luck our vessel was driven high and dry on the sandy shore and did not go to pieces. We're living aboard of her, and have provisions enough to last us some time. Besides, we find plenty of shellfish among the rocks. Father also has no difficulty catching fish from the end of a reef of rocks. Then there's lots of plantains, coconuts and some bananas on the island, as well as a spring of fresh water. There is no danger of any one starving on this place. We could have managed to get along even without our own provisions."

"I'm glad to hear that," interjected Mat. "We haven't had but one decent meal in three days. We were seasick till yesterday afternoon, when we were made to go on deck and work the pump because the schooner was leaking. Now I'm so hungry I believe I could eat a raw fish, and I guess Tom and Jack here feel the same way."

"You can bet your life I do," said Tom. "I could eat anything."

"You shall breakfast with us," said the girl. "Father was making the fire in the cookstove when I came over to the spring in this grove for a pail of water. I was on my way to the banana grove at the other end of the island when I saw you boys. I was so surprised I didn't know what to do. We won't mind the bananas now, for we have plenty of other food without them. Here is the spring."

She took up the pail to dip it in the bubbling basin when Jack interposed.

"Allow me, miss. I'll carry the water for you."

"Thank you," she replied, with a smile. "But, dear me, you haven't told me your names."

"My name is Jack Dalton. This is my friend, Mat Mulford, and this is Tom Trimble. Now will you tell us your name, miss?"

"Eva White. You three don't look at all like sailors."

"We're not. We belong in the village of Blueville, Long Island. It was all owing to a fog that caught us in a boat on Great South Bay, three nights ago, that we're in our present unfortunate pickle. I'll tell you our story after we have had something to eat."

"Father and I will be glad to hear it. Since it was your

fate to be wrecked, I'm glad you came ashore on this island, for you'll be company for us until we're all taken off. You don't know how lonely we have been—just our two selves—since we were wrecked here.”

“We're mighty glad to find somebody on the island, too,” said Jack. “But what became of the crew of the yacht? Were they lost?”

“Yes. We had a sailing-master, a cook and one sailor. They were on deck when our yacht struck the beach. Father and I were in the cabin. Father went on deck after the yacht came ashore, and then there wasn't a soul aboard but he and I. He told me that they must have been washed off by a big wave and drowned.”

They now emerged on the other side of the grove.

Right before them, well up on the beach, with her bowsprit and bows jammed between two stout cocoanut trees, which held her on an even keel with a vise-like grip, was a graceful-looking sloop-yacht, about thirty-five feet long.

She had a good-sized trunk cabin, a cook-room, which held two bunks, besides a stove, forward, and a standing-room, or cockpit, aft.

A short stovepipe projected from the roof of the cook-room, and at this moment smoke was issuing from it.

“Father,” cried the girl, as she stepped on the deck, after ascending a rude four-runged ladder, with the boys behind her, “I've brought some visitors.”

Almost instantly the head of a fine-looking man, evidently a gentleman, popped up through the entrance to the cook-room, and he gazed with astonishment at the three boys.

“Why, where did they come from? Is there a vessel anchored off the island?” he added eagerly, for he would have gladly welcomed the prospect of release from the island prison.

“They were wrecked on the northern shore of the island this morning,” replied his daughter.

“Indeed,” replied the gentleman, surveying them with interest.

“They are the only survivors of a schooner from the United States. This is Jack Dalton,” she added, laying her hand on Jack's arm.

“Happy to make your acquaintance, young man,” said Mr. White, stepping up the two stairs that led down into the galley and extending his hand, which Jack took.

Jack then introduced his companions.

“I will have breakfast for you right away,” said Eva White, taking up the pail of water Jack had deposited on deck and disappearing with it into the cook-room.

“We are companions in misfortune,” said Mr. White, smiling. “This yacht of mine was driven ashore here three months ago, and since then my daughter and myself have been living aboard of her like a pair of hermits. We are very thankful to have fared as well as we have under the circumstances. Had the yacht struck on the reef yonder she would undoubtedly have gone to pieces, and we would have shared the fate of our sailing-master and the two hands. As it is, she selected a very snug berth to beach herself, and was so good as to jam herself into an upright position, as you see. I believe if she could be hauled off she'd be as good as ever, for she's a stout boat, and there are four airtight compartments in her hold that would prevent her from

sinking even if she capsized at sea. What was the name of your schooner, and where were you bound?”

“The schooner was called the Ellen Lane, sir,” replied Jack. “She was a fruiter hailing from New York and bound for Santiago de Cuba.”

“And you boys are the only survivors?”

“Yes, sir.”

“You hardly look like young sailors. Perhaps you were passengers?”

“We were, sir, but against our wills.”

“Passengers against your wills?” ejaculated Mr. White, in some surprise.

“Yes, sir. We were carried out of Great South Bay, Long Island, in a small boat three nights ago in a fog. Next morning we found ourselves at sea out of sight of land. We were picked up by the schooner in the afternoon. That night a storm came on which lasted two days and three nights, and it finished the vessel this morning off this island.”

“You've been the victims of quite a chapter of accidents. Where do you belong?”

“In the village of Blueville, Long Island.”

“You were out sailboating on the bay, I presume?”

“No, sir. We were carried off from the county road between Blueville and the railroad station by a rascally sailor.”

“Carried off by a rascally sailor!” exclaimed Mr. White, astonished.

“At least I was carried off by the sailor, who had a grudge against me. My chums here tried to save me and were knocked out by the rascal on board his sloop. He carried us across the bay, landed us on an island near the south shore, and left us marooned there. We found a boat along the beach, took possession of it and started to row across to the north shore. We had hardly started when the fog set in around us and we lost our bearings. We rowed for several hours, and not fetching the shore gave it up till the fog should lift. We fell asleep in the boat, and when we awoke we were out in the Atlantic, as I have already told you.”

“Upon my word, you lads have had a most remarkable series of adventures. I'm afraid the loss of your schooner was the worst of all, for you are now ashore on an island that I fear is seldom visited. We are all likely to remain here some time. Perhaps for months. Fortunately, we are not likely to suffer for food and water while we are fated to stay here. That, at least, is some consolation. In the meantime, the worst feature in your case is that your parents will have no idea where you boys have vanished to. They will hunt for you in vain, and in the end, if your stay is prolonged, will give you up for dead. However, it will all come out right by and by. You will, of course, remain my guests during our stay here, and when we shall have been rescued I will see that you get back to your homes.”

“We are very much obliged to you, Mr. White,” said Jack, “and shall appreciate your hospitality. You are the owner of this yacht, I think?”

“Yes. My daughter and myself, with a sailing-master and two hands, have been cruising among the Bahama Islands all winter. We had just started for New York, where our home is, when this misfortune happened to us.”

Mr. White said that Jack could occupy the sailing-master's stateroom in the cabin, while Tom and Mat would no doubt be contented to berth in the galley where there were two bunks.

Any arrangement at all was satisfactory to the boys, and as Mr. White was about to show them into the cabin, Miss Eva appeared up the galley steps with a smoking dish of fish in one hand, and another of fried potatoes in the other.

The appetizing smell of the food made the mouths of the boys water.

"Will one of you boys go into the galley and bring the coffee pot?" asked the girl as she passed them on her way to the cabin, where the table was already set for two.

"I'll get it, Miss Eva," said Jack, with alacrity.

He disappeared into the cook-room in two bounds.

Mr. White piloted Tom and Mat into the cabin, where Eva was placing three more plates around the board, with the requisite number of knives, forks, spoons, cups and saucers.

She cut up a loaf of bread she had made herself, and supplemented it with a dish of soda crackers and some plantains.

By the time she had things to rights, Jack appeared with the hot coffee.

The yacht owner helped the boys to liberal supplies of fish and potatoes, while Eva poured the coffee.

"I'm sorry to say that we haven't any butter," said Mr. White, as he passed the bread around. "We had a good supply aboard when we were wrecked, but it only lasted us three weeks, though we managed to keep it fresh by sinking it in the spring of the grove."

"We can get along without butter," said Jack, who sat next to Eva, with his mouth full of fish. "This breakfast is a regular feast. I never tasted anything so good in all my life. Isn't that a fact, Mat?"

"Bet your life it is," mumbled Mat, who was filling up at a great rate in common with his associates.

Eva had cooked a liberal supply, knowing that the boys were famished, so there was enough for all, though there was nothing left but the bones when the meal was finished.

The boys insisted on making themselves useful to the extent of clearing off the table and washing up the dishes, under the supervision of Miss Eva, who laughingly declared that it was quite a treat to have three such active assistants at her disposal.

CHAPTER XI.

WAS THIS THE TREASURE KEY?

After everything was cleared up Jack proposed that the four of them take a walk around the island.

"You'll need hats," said Miss Eva. "There's a couple in the cooking-room that belonged to the cook and the seaman. I'll see if I can get another from the cabin."

She got a soft hat that formerly belonged to the sailing-master, and it fitted Jack exactly.

The other two were white canvas-covered ones, similar to those worn by the naval reserves, and by putting strips of paper in the lining they were made to fit the heads of Tom and Mat.

The party then set out for their walk.

The boys soon found that the sun was uncommonly hot in that region, and it wasn't long before they were glad to suggest a temporary retirement under the trees.

While they were sitting down in the shade Jack told Eva the story of their adventures from the moment they were waylaid by Jim Crowe at the bridge on their way to the village from the railroad station to the wreck of the schooner off the island that morning.

"You boys have had an exciting time of it," said the girl.

"You can gamble on it we have," said Mat, in a vigorous way. "If anybody had told me last Tuesday that in less than a week I'd be down on an island in the Caribbean Sea I'd have thought he was crazy. Yet here I am down here four days later."

"And likely to stay here for awhile to come," grinned Jack.

"That's the fiercest part of it," admitted Mat. "If vessels never put in here how are we going to get away at all?"

"We must keep a sharp lookout for any craft that approaches near enough to see a signal and then build a fire, and by covering it with wet leaves send up a column of smoke to attract attention," said Jack.

"Those aboard might not pay any attention to such a signal," interjected Tom.

"We'll have to take our chances on it."

"What's the matter with our trying to get the yacht afloat again?" suggested Mat, as though he thought he had originated a brilliant idea.

"It would be fine if we could do it, but there's no way of getting around it that I can see," replied Jack. "It would take considerable power to dislodge her from her present position and then push or haul her into the water. If we can't get away without floating her, we'll stay here till our hair turns gray. Come, let's go on. It will be pleasanter to keep in the shade of the grove as far as it goes."

They continued their walk westward across the island. They took another rest in the banana grove, and ate some of the luscious fruit.

When they left this grove they saw the end of the island and the ocean a short distance away.

There were several large rocks between them and the beach.

There was one in particular that attracted Jack's notice, for it looked like a huge mound.

He walked around the three sides that were not obstructed by the rocks, and studied it with so much care that Tom and Mat asked him what there was about it that interested him.

"It puts me in mind of something," replied Jack, thinking of the mound on the treasure island as recorded on the chart taken from him by Jim Crowe. "This island runs due east and west, judging from the course of the sun."

"That's what it does," replied Mat.

"Do you think this island is one of the Bahamas, Miss Eva," said Jack, turning to the girl.

"Yes. It's what father calls a little key."

"Little key, eh?" said Jack, reflectively. "Is there any big island not far away?"

"Oh, yes. Watling's Island is about ten or fifteen miles to the south. We put in there for a few hours on the after-

noon of the day we went ashore here. We left there about sundown and stood north. This key is not down on our chart. Probably that's the reason our sailing-master did not give it a wide berth as he would have done, I am sure, if he knew it was in our path."

When they returned to the yacht Jack asked Mr. White if he had a chart of the Caribbean Sea aboard.

"Certainly. We wouldn't think of sailing around among the islands without it."

"May I see it?"

"Of course. Come into the cabin and I'll spread it out on the table."

"Where is Watling's Island?" asked Jack, as soon as the chart was before him.

Mr. White pointed at it and then said:

"The island we're on is right here," and he pointed to a small pencil mark on the chart.

"How can you tell that it's there?" said Jack. "Your daughter told me that it was not down on this chart, and that was the reason why the sailing-master did not give it a wide enough berth, because he didn't know it was in the way."

"It was not down on the chart until I put that little mark there to designate its presence," replied Mr. White, "and my daughter was right in saying that Mr. Jay, our sailing-master, did not know that there was an island about twelve miles northeast of Watling's. Now I will answer your question as to how I know the island is where I placed it. Mr. Jay showed me how to find the position of the yacht any day at noon when the sun was shining by taking a sight with the quadrant, and making the proper calculations afterward. Well, a few days after we were wrecked on this key it occurred to me to locate its position just as if it was the yacht. I took my bearings at noon, made my calculations, and discovered that this island was practically in longitude 74 degrees, 16 minutes west, and latitude 24 degrees, 30 minutes north. You see I have marked it on the chart. That makes it just about 12 miles northeast of Watling's."

Jack took the copy he had made of the chart on the night Captain Norris was murderously assaulted by Jim Crowe from his pocket and examined it.

He found that while there was a difference of three degrees in the longitude and one degree in the latitude, the minutes corresponded in both cases with the figures he had taken down from the chart.

"What would be the distance in miles between longitude 71 and 74, Mr. White?" asked Jack.

"About 200."

"That would be in a horizontal line, of course?"

"Of course."

"Now, suppose the line was at an angle, say from Grand Caicos to Watling's Island, what would be the distance in miles?"

"You want to know the distance in a straight line from Grand Caicos to Watling's, is that it?"

"Yes, sir."

Mr. White made sundry calculations, and then said:

"About 250 miles."

"About 250 miles," repeated the boy, his heart beginning to beat quickly.

Jim Crowe had remarked, when he pointed to the faint outlines of writing which the application of heat had produced on the blank side of the chart, that the treasure island was not near Grand Caicos at all, but near another island 250 miles or so from it.

What if he and his companions had actually been wrecked on the treasure island?

Everything seemed to jibe with the writing on the chart except the important facts of the latitude and longitude, and the reference to the island of Grand Caicos.

Suppose Grand Caicos was to be read Watling's?

The more he thought about it the more certain he became that this was the Little Key referred to in the chart.

The island lay east and west as it should according to the chart.

The mound was at the extreme western end as the chart indicated.

Everything seemed to point to the conclusion that the boy might be now said to have arrived at.

Jack looked up and saw that Mr. White's gaze rested on his face inquiringly.

He was evidently wondering why the lad had asked the questions about distances, and what reference they had to the paper in his hand.

"That is all, sir," said Jack. "I am much obliged to you for showing me this chart, and for answering my questions."

"You are quite welcome," said the yacht owner, returning the chart to a locker.

"I may want to have a little talk with you, sir, after dinner," said Jack, as they walked on deck together. "It is connected with a story which I will relate—a story that directly concerns the old sea captain with whom I lived in Blueville, and incidentally with myself."

"I am at your service at any time, Dalton," replied Mr. White. "I shall be glad to listen to anything you may have to say to me."

"Thank you, sir. I think this is a very important matter, and one that will rather astonish you. I must think it over well before I see you about it."

Miss Eva was just starting to prepare dinner, with the assistance of Mat Mulford and Tom Trimble.

Jack, however, did not volunteer, as he would eagerly have done under other circumstances, but left the yacht and entered the grove to consider without danger of interruption all the facts of the piratical treasure that he was now almost fully persuaded was concealed in the mound on the western end of that very island.

CHAPTER XII.

JACK TELLS HIS STORY OF THE TREASURE KEY.

When dinner was on the table Mat and Tom looked around for Jack.

"Where the dickens did he go?" asked Mat.

"Blessed if I know," replied Tom.

Mat went to the stern of the yacht and yelled out:

"Helloa, Jack!"

He repeated the hail several times and then the two boys saw their comrade coming toward the stranded vessel from the grove.

"Where have you been, old man?" asked Mat. "Come aboard—dinner is ready."

Jack didn't say where he had been.

He came aboard and followed Mat and Tom into the cabin, where they found Eva and her father waiting for them.

When the meal was finished Jack said he had a story to tell and there was no reason why everybody present should not hear the particulars.

After a moment or two Jack began:

"Captain Norris possessed a chart, which he got from a dying sailor in Rio de Janeiro twelve years ago, which purported to reveal the hiding place of a pirate treasure. Jim Crowe, the sailor who called at the store on the afternoon you two were there and saw the interview between him and the captain, knew that he had this chart, and it was to get it away from Captain Norris that he turned up in the village, called at the store and made his demand for it. The captain refused to give it up and Crowe went away, as you know. He returned later, as you also know, climbed into Captain Norris's bedroom from the outside and started to hunt for the chart. The captain and I were in the store at the time and we heard a suspicious noise upstairs. The captain rushed up and I followed him. I reached his room after he was stabbed by the sailor. I jumped at the rascal, he tripped over the captain's body, fell up against the corner of the chimney, and rolled over unconscious."

"He did!" exclaimed Mat. "Why didn't you secure him when you had such a fine chance to do it?"

"Because I thought about nothing but the captain. I tried to stanch the blood that was flowing from the wound in his side, and partially succeeded. When Captain Norris regained his consciousness he made me get the chart, which he had concealed in the chimney, because he said he wanted to know that it was in my hands before he died. As soon as I got hold of the chart, the captain fainted, and I started off at once for the doctor. You remember I found you alone in the store, Tom, and you asked me why I was so excited," said Jack.

"That's right," nodded Tom. "I asked you what was the matter, and you replied that murder was the matter, and your answer kind of knocked me silly."

"Well," went on Jack, "the sailor returned that night after you and Mat left the store."

"So you told me," said Tom.

"After you two left I went up to my room, took the chart out of my pocket, and began to study it out. I succeeded all right after a time, and finally I made a free copy of it.

"At that moment I heard a noise at the window. I looked and saw the face of Jim Crowe at one of the panes. He had been long enough there to discover that the chart was in my possession, and he determined to get it away from me."

Jack then went on to tell what occurred immediately after, and how the affair terminated in the discomfiture of the sailor.

He proceeded to tell without further interruption how the sailor had evidently seen them going to the station for the mail-pouch, and how he laid his plans to get him (Jack) in his power when they returned along the road.

"It is doubtful whether he would have succeeded, with

you two to help me, if we hadn't been delayed so long at the station that it was dark when we reached the bridge near which he had his sloop moored. We couldn't see the rope, which you told me was stretched across the end of the bridge, and so we bumped against it, and in the confusion that ensued the rascal got me into his clutches and carried me aboard his vessel. You fellows, hearing my cries for help, followed and got into trouble. As you know we were carried across the bay and left on that island, while Crowe sailed off to parts unknown. You don't know, however, what took place in the cabin between the villain and myself," and Jack told all the particulars.

When he explained how the visible writing on the chart was misleading in its most important point, that the true latitude and longitude of the treasure key was inscribed on the reverse side in invisible ink, which could be brought out only by the application of heat, his hearers were astonished.

"Then the copy you made was no good," said Tom.

"Not on its face, but I think it will turn up a winner after all."

"How?" asked Mat.

"Because by the most astonishing good luck I am satisfied that this little key on which we were wrecked is the treasure island."

Tom and Mat gasped again.

"Before I go any further I will read you the copy I made of the chart," said Jack.

He took it from his pocket and read it, altering the last sentence to "dig one fathom, northwest," instead of one foot.

"The latitude and longitude as given here would no doubt be correct for an island twelve miles northeast of Grand Caicos, which is 250 miles southeast of this key," said Jack. "The treasure key is not there, however. The writing was made purposely misleading by the man who wrote it, who put the true directions in sympathetic ink on the reverse side. Captain Norris made two vain attempts to find the island in the neighborhood of Grand Caicos. Had it been there he would no doubt have located it."

Jack then proceeded to explain why, in addition to the fact of a large mound being on this key, he believed this to be the treasure island.

When he finished his story Tom and Mat, as well as Eva, were greatly excited over the prospect of finding a lot of buried money on the island.

"I move that we start for the west end of the island right away and investigate that mound," suggested Tom.

"Second the motion," cried Mat, with alacrity.

"I'm in favor of it," said Jack, "if Mr. White can supply us with implements with which to break into the mound."

"I can furnish you with a spade and a pickaxe," replied the yacht owner. "The latter will probably be the most serviceable for making an impression on the mound. Did you notice what it was made of?"

"It appeared to be like the rocks that were near it, very hard, sir."

"You didn't see any sign of an entrance to it, I should judge, or you would have been satisfied beyond all doubt that it was the mound referred to in the chart you spoke of."

"No, sir; there is no sign whatever of a door."

"If the entrance really faces east, about midway of the mound, you will, of course, direct your energies at that point."

"Yes, sir."

The entire party adjourned to the deck.

Mr. White told Jack where he would find the shovel and pickaxe, and the boy got them.

CHAPTER XIII.

A GALLANT RESCUE.

The young people were so excited over the prospect of a genuine pirate treasure hunt that they would have overheated themselves in their eagerness to reach the mound if Mr. White hadn't curbed their impatience.

"I hope we'll be able to get this treasure before Jim Crowe comes here," said Jack. "He will no doubt bring one or more companions with him, and there is liable to be trouble if he catches us on the ground."

"There'll be trouble anyway," said Mat. "If he comes too late and finds the mound broken into, and the treasure gone, he'll be in a mighty bad humor. He's sure to discover us on board the stranded yacht, and the moment he pipes you off, Jack, he'll know where to look for the gold. Then there'll be something doing, I'm afraid."

"I have two excellent rifles and a brace of revolvers on board," said Mr. White. "I dare say we'll be able to give them a warm reception if they seek to molest us."

"That's fine," replied Jack. "I was afraid we might be up against a good deal of trouble trying to defend the treasure if we found it. Since you have such a supply of weapons I guess we'll be able to take care of ourselves."

In due time they reached the western end of the island and the mound was before them.

"I took that simply for an unusually large-sized rock," said Mr. White. "I noticed it when I first made the round of the island. So that's your mound?"

"I am in hopes that it is," replied Jack. "This is about where we ought to begin operations," and he pointed at what appeared to be the center of the eastern face of the mound. "Give me the pickaxe, Tom. I'll start the ball rolling."

The point of the pickaxe rebounded as from solid rock.

Jack worked away for five minutes, when he desisted with the perspiration running down his cheeks.

Mat then took a turn and after him Tom had his innings.

The sum total of their united efforts seemed to indicate that the mound was merely a big rock after all.

They dug into the rock over a space a yard square and nothing came of it.

Mat then declared he had had enough for that day at least, and Tom said ditto.

Jack reluctantly agreed to knock off operations until the following morning.

They left their tools on the ground and returned to the yacht.

The evening was spent on deck in general conversation, under a brilliant sky.

About nine the moon rose above the watery horizon, presenting a lovely picture.

When Mr. White suggested that it was time to retire, Eva declared that she did not feel the least bit sleepy, and suggested a walk to the boys.

She seized Jack's arm, as if he were her special property, and they went off together, Mat and Tom following behind.

The sea was comparatively calm, but the water ebbed and flowed about the reef, which ran out for quite a distance from the eastern end of the island near where the yacht was stranded.

It was not easy walking across these rocks, and some of them were slippery from the slime and seaweed, but for all that Eva insisted on going out on them, and took the lead at that.

Jack followed close behind her, admiring the graceful way she sprang from rock to rock where the water flowed between.

Finally they reached the extreme end and stood there for some time in a group admiring the beauties of the night, and the glorious moon-kissed sea.

While they were there the tide was rising, and when they started to return they found some of the rocks covered that had been bare before.

This fact would not have seriously embarrassed them if Eva had been a little less gay and looked where she was going.

"I'll race you boys back," she said, with a saucy toss of her head.

"No, Miss Eva," objected Jack, "I wouldn't advise you to try it. It's too dangerous fun for you."

"Catch me," she cried, suddenly, starting forward like a fawn.

"Hold on!" shouted Jack, starting after her. "You're liable to slip!"

She stepped on a slimy rock, and the moment her weight rested on that foot she slid like a shot into the sea and was borne off by the undertow.

She uttered a shriek as she went down.

"Great Scott!" exclaimed Jack, seeing her disappear like a stage demon through a trap, and he prepared to spring after her.

She came up yards away, and a swirl of the incoming tide bore her out from the reef.

Jack threw off his hat and jacket, and springing into the sea struck out vigorously for the imperilled girl.

Her father, who was not yet asleep, heard her shriek, sprang from his berth and rushed on deck.

Not seeing his daughter, and observing that two of the boys stood midway off the reef much excited, while the third was swimming out to sea, Mr. White divined at once that his child was in grave peril, and he rushed anxiously toward the reef.

When Eva came up again Jack was not far from her.

She made no outcry this time, for she was partly unconscious.

As she started to sink for the third and last time, Jack, by an extra effort, succeeded in grasping her so that she couldn't seize him in the frantic struggles she immediately made.

He let her exhaust herself, and then spoke to her reassuringly as he supported her head well above the water.

In this way he succeeded in calming her.

"That's right. Don't struggle. I'll save you if you give me the chance to do so."

She didn't make another struggle after that, but let her head rest against his.

He struck out for the beach, touching bottom within a dozen yards of the shore and leading the dripping girl the rest of the way.

Her father, with Mat and Tom, were on hand when they arrived.

The two boys had already explained to Mr. White how the accident occurred.

The yacht owner pressed the girl to his breast and kissed her.

She was his only child, and his wife was dead, so he did not think of chiding her for her foolishness, but was only too glad to have her restored to him unharmed.

Grasping Jack's hand she pressed it to her lips.

"I shall never forget how good you were to come to my rescue," she said, earnestly. "I shall be grateful to you as long as I live."

"That's all right," replied Jack. "You don't suppose that I was going to let you drown when I can swim like a duck."

Mr. White then thanked the boy in feeling terms, and assured him that he would make it all right with him some day.

The party hastened aboard the yacht and turned in for the night.

CHAPTER XIV.

FINDING THE TREASURE AND AN UNPLEASANT SURPRISE.

Eva turned out next morning as bright and chipper as if nothing had happened to her the night before.

After breakfast was over and the things cleared up, Eva and the three boys started for the western end of the island to resume their treasure hunt.

This time Jack carried the yacht's compass.

When they reached the mound he placed it on the ground and looked to see how east pointed with reference to the rock.

The result of his inspection caused him to take the pick and begin at a new spot, not far from where their first efforts were directed.

The boys worked with considerably industry for an hour before they achieved any encouraging result.

Then Jack opened up a crack with the pick, and following it along it presently developed that a stone slab had been inserted in the rock.

"That settles it," said Jack, joyously. "This is the mound, all right."

They worked away with renewed industry, and in the course of half an hour, in spite of the heat under which they sweltered, they succeeded in dislodging the slab, which they moved to one side, disclosing an opening, like the porthole of a ship, on a level with the ground.

Looking inside, the boys saw that the interior of the mound was about four feet lower than the ground outside.

The honor of being the first to enter the treasure hole was accorded to Jack, as he was the head and front of the enterprise.

Tom and Mat followed him.

"The directions are to dig one fathom, or six feet, northwest from the entrance," said Jack.

He asked Eva, who was standing at the entrance looking in, to pass him the compass.

With the instrument in his arms he measured off six feet at a rough guess, which brought him close to the back of the mound.

Then he called for the shovel and began to dig, Tom and Mat getting outside in order to give him room to work.

After going down three feet he struck something hard that rang under the blow of the shovel.

Clearing away the loose earth Jack saw that the obstruction was a brass-bound box.

"That's the treasure," he muttered, excitedly. "This is where Jim Crowe gets left. Once we manage to transport it aboard of the yacht, I'll wager he'll have a mighty slim chance of ever seeing any of it."

He put in half an hour digging the earth and sand from around it until he got about a third of it exposed.

Then he reported his discovery to Eva and the boys outside.

Tom and Mat shouted and threw their hats in the air.

"I'm going back to the yacht to tell my father the news and bring him over," said Eva.

"All right," said Jack. "Get him over as soon as you can."

He told Mat to hand him the hammer and the cold chisel.

As soon as he got them he started in to break open the cover of the brass-bound box.

In the meantime a surprise was under way for the young treasure hunters.

Unnoticed by them a small sloop had been approaching the island and was now close in shore.

There were two men aboard of her—one sitting at the helm, the other standing on the deck with one hand around the mast.

The mound and rocks hid the boys and what was going on from them.

It took Jack about a quarter of an hour to break open the cover of the chest.

When he threw it up his eyes were dazzled by the sight of the stacks of gold money which the top tray of the chest contained.

He lifted this tray up after considerable effort, by the aid of its two handles, and saw that there was a similar one underneath equally well filled with gold.

As Jack lifted the first box of coin out of the opening, two forms suddenly appeared over the rocks behind him.

Tom and Mat recognized the piratical-looking Jim Crowe in the lead, and sprang forward to defend the treasure.

The sailor Crowe was clearly staggered, and he paused on the top of the rock, glaring down at the boys as though he couldn't believe his eyes.

He sprang down and reached for the tray of gold.

Mat swung the flat side of the pick around and struck him a blow on the head that laid him out senseless on the ground.

The villain's companion held back undecided what to do under the circumstances.

The resolute attitude of the boys, especially as Jack had reached out and drawn Crowe's revolver from his belt, deterred him from taking the offensive.

At that moment, too, Mr. White and Eva appeared on the scene, astonished spectators of the incident.

"Tie that rascal's hands, fellows," said Jack. "It won't do to let him go now that we've got him in our power."

"What'll we tie him with?" asked Mat.

"Use your handkerchiefs for the present. When we get him to the yacht we'll substitute rope."

Tom and Mat quickly followed out Jack's directions, and they took care to make the knots good and fast.

"I say, what do you mean by treatin' my companion that way for?" objected the sailor's associate.

Jack sprang out of the mound and covered the fellow with the revolver.

"If you don't want the same kind of treatment just skip out the way you came. Do you understand?" replied the boy in a determined tone.

"No, I don't," answered the man, doggedly. "Crowe and me came all the way from New York to get that treasure. It belongs to us, for Crowe has the chart to it."

"Crowe stole that chart from me. I got it from a man who came into possession of it honestly years ago. Consequently I am the rightful owner of this treasure, and neither you nor Jim Crowe are entitled to a cent of this money."

"Well, I call that hard luck. I navigated the sloop we came in all the way from New York with the understanding that I was to have a third of whatever we found on this island," growled the man.

"That's your funeral, not mine. You knew you were taking chances, anyway. You had no guarantee that the chart Crowe held out as a bait to you would turn up anything at all. Isn't that a fact?"

The man made no reply, but cast his eyes longingly down at the tray of money.

"You've got a raft of gold there," he said. "You might give a chap a small share. You'd never miss it."

"I'm not going to argue the matter with you. You say you came here in a sloop?"

"Yes."

"Where is the vessel?"

"Yonder," replied the fellow, waving his arm back of him.

"Close to the shore?"

"About fifty feet out. We rowed to the beach in a small boat."

"Well, come down here," said Jack.

"Are you goin' to make me a prisoner like you did him?" asked the man, suspiciously.

"Come down off that rock, do you hear?"

The fellow hesitated.

"I've got no time to fool with you. If you don't want to try and dodge a bullet you'll do as I say, and be mighty spry about it."

Jack spoke in a tone that showed he meant business, so the man reluctantly obeyed.

"Here's my handkerchief, Mat," said Jack, tossing the article to him. "Tie that fellow's hands behind him."

The man submitted to the operation with very bad grace.

"Now sit down under that tree yonder," said Jack.

The prisoner walked to the spot indicated and sat down.

"Tom, you and Mat haul Jim Crowe over beside his friend."

This was done.

"Tom, take this revolver and stand guard over that pair of rascals."

Tom took the weapon and proceeded to carry out his instructions.

"Now, Mr. White, will you please come with me? You can come, too, Eva."

The three walked down to the beach and around the mound till they came in sight of the sloop, which was anchored a short distance off shore.

"Now, Mr. White, you are something of a navigator, I think. Don't you think you can fetch Watling's Island, twelve miles to the southwest, in that sloop?"

"No doubt of it."

"Very good. You have no objection to leaving the island, I guess?"

"My daughter and I will be glad to do so."

"That's what I thought. And the three of us will be glad to get back to the United States as soon as we can. We'll load the treasure aboard of the sloop, take whatever we may need for the trip to Watling's Island, and leave those two men here marooned till they can be sent for by the authorities at Watling's, where I propose to make a charge against Jim Crowe. How does that plan suit you?"

"It is what I would have proposed myself," replied Mr. White.

"You can engage a steamer to come over here and drag your yacht off the island. Whatever repairs she may stand in need of no doubt can be made at Watling's Island. Then I dare say you'll be able to engage a sailing-master there. Tom, Mat and myself will, with your permission, act as your crew. Though we are not sailors, we can make ourselves useful under any one who is competent to navigate the yacht to the United States. Have you any objection to this arrangement, sir?"

"None whatever. I may say it is exactly what I would wish," replied Mr. White.

"Then we'll consider the matter settled," said Jack. "I dare say we'll be able to reach Watling's Island before dark if we start soon. I would suggest then that Eva returns to the yacht and gets dinner ready for us while we are getting the rest of the treasure out of the mound and conveying our find on board the sloop. Then we'll be able to leave the island soon after we have had our meal."

Eva said she would go at once and get the dinner ready, and the three then returned to the entrance of the mound, where they found Mat trying to estimate the value of the gold in the tray.

CHAPTER XV.

THE TREASURE OF THE INDIES—CONCLUSION.

Mr. White examined the coins and pronounced them Spanish money over 100 years old.

"There's a whole lot more in a chest in the mound," said Jack. "We'll take this lot aboard the sloop first. Mat, you go back to the yacht with Miss Eva, and bring some line to tie those rascals with so they won't break loose and give us trouble. In fact, Tom had better go with you, and help you bring those empty boxes I saw in the pantry. Don't forget to fetch a pocketful of nails, too."

While the boys were away Jack and Mr. White watched over the prisoners.

Jim Crowe remained insensible until Tom and Mat got back with the rope and the boxes.

Both men were lashed back to back against the cocoanut tree.

When Crowe recovered his senses and found himself helpless, he was furious.

Now that several boxes were at hand, Jack decided to bring all the treasure out before removing any of it aboard the sloop.

There proved to be four trays of coin all told, and Mr. White roughly estimated its value at over \$100,000.

The bottom of the chest, however, contained a collection of jeweled watches, rings of considerable value and beauty, diamond and other jeweled ornaments once worn by ladies of wealth, necklaces, gold snuff and tobacco boxes, and other articles of more or less intrinsic worth, whose combined value, Mr. White said, might be anywhere from a quarter to half a million, for many of the diamonds and rubies were of large size, and worth thousands of dollars apiece themselves.

At any rate, the whole treasure might easily be considered worth half a million.

The yacht owner congratulated Jack on the results he had achieved.

"You're a rich boy," he said, with a smile.

"I don't know about that, sir," replied Jack. "I think this treasure by rights belongs to Captain Norris. Or, at least, he ought to be entitled to half of it."

"Nonsense!" answered Mr. White. "The chart to this treasure, according to your own statement, was given to you by the captain with the understanding that you were to benefit by it if you ever were so fortunate as to be able to locate the island to which it referred. Now, as things turned out, that chart was wholly useless as a guide, because the information legible to the eye was misleading. Therefore, it was useless to the captain, or any one not aware that the true directions were inscribed in sympathetic ink on its back. Pure accident brought you to this island, and your own sagacity in making the correct deductions enabled you to find the treasure."

"That's true, sir; but if it hadn't been for the chart I would not have suspected that there was a treasure on this island. While the chart didn't put me in the way of finding the island, it enabled me to get on the scent of the treasure after I got here. In my opinion the captain is entitled to a square half of the find after I have deducted a liberal allowance for Tom and Mat."

"Well, Jack, you are the arbiter in the matter. If you feel that you ought to divide with Captain Norris, no one has any right to object to your doing so. As the case stands the treasure is yours to do with as you choose."

"All right, sir. Let's box up as much of it as we can and stow it aboard of the sloop. I guess the balance can remain in the chest, which we can easily move now."

Accordingly the four boxes were filled, nailed up and removed to the sloop.

"I think we'd better get the anchor up and sail around to the other end of the island, Mr. White," said Jack, after everything was on board.

"I agree with you. I think, however, that the two rascals had better be put in the mound and left there till we are ready to leave the island."

The boys went ashore, dragged their prisoners into the mound and left them there after placing the slab partly over the entrance.

They then returned aboard the sloop, hoisted the mainsail, and the little vessel carried them around to the other end of the island, where they anchored and went ashore to eat dinner which Eva had ready by this time.

"I don't like the idea of leaving those two rascals at large after we leave the island," said Mr. White; "but as several days might elapse before we can return properly equipped to get the yacht afloat it would hardly be right to leave them tied up."

"Couldn't we place a week's supply of provisions in the mound, release them and fix the entrance so they couldn't get out?" asked Jack.

"We might do that," replied the yacht owner, reflectively.

Jack's suggestion was finally adopted.

Leaving Eva on the yacht the others carried a good supply of the vessel's stores, including a small keg which they filled with cool water at the spring; across the island.

They gathered some plantain fruit and a big bunch of ripe bananas also.

The food was introduced into the mound and the two men released from their fetters, Jack holding Jim Crowe in subjection with the revolver.

One end of the slab was broken off so that air could enter the mound, and then it was fitted into place.

The party then returned to the yacht.

Selecting what they wished to carry away with them, and taking it on board the sloop, sail was made for Watling's Island.

Mr. White expected that he would have to hire a navigator to take the sloop to Nassau, in New Providence, about 250 miles to the west, in order to charter a small steamer to return to Treasure Key, as they called it, to get the yacht off.

On their arrival at Watling's Island, however, they found a good-sized steam yacht in the little harbor, with a party of English people on board.

Mr. White immediately boarded her and had a conference with her owner.

His name was Sir John Blount, and he graciously consented to steam over to the little key and try to get Mr. White's yacht afloat.

Accordingly, next morning the yacht steamed over in an hour, a hawser was made fast to the stern of Mr. White's boat, and she was easily hauled out into deep water.

She made considerable water, as the heat had opened her seams, but the owner of the steam yacht sent a couple of

hands aboard to pump her out on the way back, though it was impossible for her to sink owing to her airtight tanks.

The yacht then steamed around to the western end of the island, where Jim Crowe and his associate were released from the mound and taken aboard the vessel.

They were carefully watched all the way back to Watling's Island.

After thanking Sir John for his kindness, Mr. White, his daughter and Jack returned to the sloop-yacht, which was moored alongside of the black sloop.

Mr. White's boat was put in shape to proceed to the United States, and after the treasure was put aboard of her the sloop was disposed of at auction, a sailing-master secured and the yacht sailed from Watling's, bound north.

Nothing of special interest happened during the four days' trip to New York, except a futile attempt on the part of the two prisoners to break out of a narrow section of the hold where they were confined.

Jack and Eva found especial enjoyment in each other's society, and were almost sorry when Sandy Hook lightship hove in sight, announcing that they were almost at their journey's end.

As soon as the yacht passed quarantine and came to anchor near the Brooklyn shore, Tom and Mat were eager to get away for home, Jack deciding to accompany them, leaving the treasure in charge of Eva's father.

They were landed and took a southshore train for the station near Blueville, the one where Jack had been accustomed to go for the mail every day.

The station agent knew all about their sudden and unexplained disappearance two weeks before, and he gaped when he saw the three boys get off the car.

They were too eager to reach the village to stop and gratify his curiosity.

There being no vehicle from Blueville at the station they had to hoof it, and they put their best foot forward over the well-remembered road.

When they reached the bridge which had been the scene of their trouble, and the beginning of their late adventures, they stooped to rest themselves and look down at the spot where the rusty black sloop had been moored.

All their recent experiences seemed like a dream to them as they stood there and talked the matter over.

At last they reached the village and began to meet people they were acquainted with.

Of course every one they met wanted to know where they had been, but they wouldn't say a word on the subject.

Jack learned to his great satisfaction that Captain Norris was almost well of his hurt, but was told that the captain was greatly worried over his disappearance.

The three soon separated, Tom and Mat rushing off to their homes, and Jack to the store.

The captain was not yet able to be downstairs, and Jack found a man he knew in temporary charge of the business.

"Good gracious! That you, Jack?" cried the man.

"Yes, it's me, all right," replied Jack, making a dash for the stairs.

In two minutes he startled Captain Norris by rushing into the room and grasping the old skipper by the hand.

"Jack," cried the astonished captain, "where have you been?"

"To the treasure island," cried Jack, "and I found the pirate gold."

It was a long and wonderful story he had to tell the captain that day, and the old skipper could hardly credit his narrative.

Of course in the end he did, but he flatly refused to accept more than a few thousand dollars of the treasure trove.

"I don't want it, Jack," he said. "It's yours, and yours it shall remain."

Next day Jack returned to New York, according to arrangement, and found Mr. White and Eva at their Madison Avenue home.

Jack learned that the gold had been placed in the vaults of a safe deposit company, while the jewels, watches, and other valuable trinkets had been turned over to the custom house for appraisalment.

Eventually they were taken out and the larger part sold, after a considerable duty had been assessed against them and paid.

Jim Crowe was taken to the county seat, near Blueville, and subsequently tried and convicted of murderous assault on Captain Norris.

His companion had been allowed to go free on the arrival of the yacht.

After the treasure had been duly converted into American money, Jack found himself worth about \$100,000.

He divided \$25,000 of this between Tom and Mat, and they considered themselves rich for village boys.

Mr. White advised Jack to invest his money in certain gild-edged bonds that he suggested, which paid five per cent. a year.

Jack did so, and thus secured a steady annual income.

Captain Norris sold out his country store and came to reside in New York with Jack as his companion.

The boy entered the College of New York, intending to become a lawyer in time.

He became a steady and welcome visitor at Mr. White's home, and the loadstone that drew him there was Eva.

In due time their friendship developed into love, and they are now engaged to be married, which event will come off as soon as Jack shall have been admitted to the bar.

Tom and Mat often come to visit him, and he occasionally revisits Blueville himself, where everybody takes his hat off to him, because the whole village knows that he is very wealthy through having discovered the Treasure of the Indies.

THE END.

Read "A GRIP ON THE MARKET; OR, A HOT TIME IN WALL STREET," which will be the next number (124) of "Fame and Fortune Weekly."

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GOOD STORIES.

At least one relic of the old English navy is to be preserved. Thanks to Lord Charles Beresford, the boatswain's pipe, which of late years has been becoming more ornamental than useful, is to be retained, and the calls which for centuries have brought men to the performance of their duties will continue to be heard on English warships. The Admiralty have ordered that at least 10 per cent. of the boys and youths in harbor training establishments are to be instructed to work to the calls of the pipe, and a prize will be given each half year to the boy in each establishment who is considered most proficient in the art of piping.

I was told at 8:30 it was time for luncheon, writes an American tinsmith working in Leipzig. On stating that I did not care to eat, I was told that it would be better if I did no work, so I sat down for half an hour and watched the others. At noon we had an hour and a half, and at 4 o'clock fifteen minutes for lunch. It may be of interest to some readers to know what the German eats. For his first breakfast he generally has a milk roll and a cup of coffee. The second breakfast is almost always a slice of bread with lard or goose oil, a piece of sausage or cheese and a bottle of beer. For dinner he has two slices of bread as above, with a herring or large green pickle, cheese or sausage and another bottle of beer. For lunch another bottle of beer and a milk roll. For supper, soup and potatoes. This is the general variety of foods we had for the four months I worked in that shop, and they had it day in and day out.

In Morocco the government will not allow grain to be sent from one part of the country to the other, and consequently a district may be so rich in corn one year that the harvest rots for lack of labor to gather it and the following season may see positive starvation in the same section. Industry is paralyzed, for no sooner does a man show signs of wealth than the local government comes down upon him for black-mail, and if he does not pay he is thrown into a dungeon and left to starve—if, indeed, he be not decapitated and his head stuck upon a spike above the city's gate as a warning to others.

A Washington educator is telling a story about a young medical friend of his who is interested in insanity symptoms and is a sort of amateur alienist. The other day the student got a chance to visit one of the wards in the asylum for the insane, and having heard that there was a man confined there who labored under the hallucination that he was God, the student asked that he be allowed to see this patient first, as he appeared the most promising for investigation. He was taken to the ward where the lunatic was confined and the following conversation ensued: Student—Are you the Deity?

Lunatic—From everlasting unto everlasting I am he. Student—Well, I've been looking for you for a long time. I have a question to ask you. How do you reconcile the doctrines of predestination and free will? The lunatic drew himself up to his full height and giving the medico a scornful glance, replied: "My dear sir, I never talk shop."

The modern custom of wearing trousers was taken from the military dress introduced into the army by the Duke of Wellington during the Peninsular war. In early days these were known as "Wellington trousers," after the Duke. When they were coming into general use at the commencement of the nineteenth century the religious world and the fashionable were most determined in their opposition. A clause in the original trust deed, dated 1820, of a Sheffield Nonconformist chapel provided that "under no circumstances whatever shall any preacher be allowed to occupy the pulpit who wears trousers." But this was not all. Some doubts were expressed in many quarters concerning the question whether a man could be religious and appear in trousers. One of the founders of the Primitive Methodist body remarked to a colleague in the ministry that "trousers-wearing, beer-drinking So-and-so will never go to heaven." Father Reece, a famous Methodist minister, twice president of the conference (born in 1765, died in 1850), could not be induced to adopt trousers, and among the Methodists was the last to follow popular fashion in this respect.

RIB TICKLERS.

A canny Scot was brought before a magistrate on the charge of being drunk and disorderly. "What have you to say for yourself, sir?" demanded the magistrate. "You look like a respectable man, and ought to be ashamed to stand there." "I am verra sorry, sir, but I cam' up in bad company fra Glasgow," humbly replied the prisoner. "What sort of company?" "A lot of teetotalers!" was the startling response. "Do you mean to say teetotalers are bad company?" thundered the magistrate. "I think they are the best of company for such as you." "Beggin' yer pardon, sir," answered the prisoner, "ye're wrong; for I had a bottle of whusky an' I had to drink it all myself!"

"Didn't you ever have any ambition in life?" asked the austere matron standing in the kitchen door. "Wunst, ma'am," said Tuffold Knutt, sighing deeply. "I have not allus led this butterfly existence. Many years ago, ma'am, I tried to raise a pair o' elegant side whiskers, but they wouldn't grow. Since then I hain't had no heart to do anything." This mournful story failing to awaken her sympathies, he shambled on to the next house.

"So you want more wages?" said the warden of the penitentiary. "That's what I do," answered the cook. "This talk of punishing trust magnates is getting me more nervous every day. If I've got to learn to cook terrapin and lobster a la Newburg, I want more pay. And what's more I want to be called a 'chef.'"

An aged colored man who had business in the News office ambled into the editorial rooms—yes, ambled is the word. He sat for several moments gazing at the pneumatic tube stations set up like horns of an orchestrion at the desks of the city and telegraph editors. There was a buzzing sound as a copy boy pulled a lever, and the old man smiled, as if expecting something pleasant, then took on a look of disappointment. A few minutes later the boy sent another piece of copy whirling upstairs, and again the visitor's expression passed from anticipation to disappointment, then bewilderment. Finally he accosted the telegraph editor: "Scuse me, suh, but mout I ax yo' what dem things is?" Certainly he might and was enlightened. "Well, I 'clah t' goodness!" he exclaimed: "I thought dey was some sort o' music box t' entertain yo' gemmens whilst yo' worked!"

THREE VISITS FROM THE FLYING DUTCHMAN

By Kit Clyde.

From the day I set foot on the decks of the good ship *Bardwell*, sailing from Boston around Cape Horn, I heard of the Flying Dutchman. As a boy I believed in all the yarns, but by the time I was out of my apprenticeship I came to take these stories for what they were worth. I am going to tell you, however, that I really saw as mysterious a craft as the traditional ghost ship, and that if my eyes were deceived, so were the optics of a whole ship's company.

In April, 1868, I was mate of an English whaling bark called the *Lord Rossmore*, Captain Pierce McConnell, and we were off the mouth of the Amazon. We had then been out three months, and were having a big run of luck. The weather seemed to be made for our special benefit. There was day after day of good working winds and smooth seas, and there was no day in which we did not sight whales. On the day of which I wish to speak particularly we had killed two fine whales, and by evening both were alongside, and the sea was as calm as a mill-pond. We should have begun the cutting-in process at once, but the decks were not yet clear of the last whale, while the men were so worn out that they clamored for a night's rest.

The barometer was high, the sea smooth, and the captain issued orders for all the men to knock off. This meant that the off watch should have their bunks, while the on watch could sleep on deck while on duty. There wasn't wind enough to drift us, and consequently we had no fear of any vessels except steamers, and they would hardly run us down on such a clear night that our ship could be seen a mile away. I own up that as soon as the vessel grew quiet I went to sleep on my post, and that I slept for a long hour. When I awoke it was with a chill of apprehension. I felt that something was very wrong, and at once inspected the decks from stem to stern. The men of my watch were stretched out here and there, all fast asleep, and everything seemed all right. We had a whale on either side, and they were riding buoyantly, while half a dozen sharks were tearing at their rough hides. Our night lights were all right, everything safe from fire, and I called myself a fool for thinking that anything was wrong. Nevertheless, I continued worried and nervous, and the desire to sleep left me entirely.

It might have been half an hour after my awakening, and I was softly pacing the deck, taking in its whole length, when a large, square-rigged ship, with every sail set, and seeming to draw, came out of the darkness to the northeast. She had a bone in her teeth, and her hull was careened over two or three streaks by the pressure of the wind, and for the moment I forgot where I was and the circumstances which surrounded me. The ship stood down to pass under our quarter, and I never took my eyes off her for an instant. She came swiftly, but there was a ghost-like movement that sent chills over me. As if she were a real ship, and as if a genuine top-sail breeze were blowing, on came the stranger, and as she was within a cable's length she shifted her helm a bit and the two craft were broadside on for a moment. There were twenty-five or thirty men at the ship's port rail watching us in true sailor fashion, and on the quarter-deck I saw the captain surveying us through his night glasses. I could see that he was an old man, having long white locks and a long white beard. Why, sir, I would stake my life on what I saw, though it would be useless to try to make you believe it.

Just as the stern of the ship was passing me her captain raised his hand, as if the motion accompanied an order, and there was a rush of the men to execute it. Sail was taken in while you could snap your finger, and the helm was put down, and the ship came into the wind. She wasn't a stone's-throw away then, and my eyes were still on her, when some one behind me hoarsely exclaimed:

"My God, Mr. Merwin, but did you ever see the likes of it?"

I turned to find one of the men behind me. I turned from him again to the strange craft, and she was gone! It took

me two or three minutes to realize that there was no wind and no sea, and that no ship could have maneuvered as she did, and then I asked of the man:

"Jones, what did you see?"

"I got a chill, sir, though it's warm enough, as we all know, and awoke to find you looking off at the water. As I stood on my feet I saw the ship, and I was right behind you when she shortened sail and came up."

"And where is she now?"

"Gone, sir! That's a ghost ship, sir, and we are in for bad luck."

I could have kicked myself for believing in what I saw. I went after the glasses, and just as I got them the lashings holding the whale on the port side gave way with a great crash, the bark keeled over to starboard with the weight of the other fish, and as she rocked back the other lashings parted, and we ran to the rails, port and starboard, in time to see the whales sink out of sight. The whole crew were aroused, and the captain stormed in a terrible way, but as no one was to blame no one could be censured. Next day it was known through the ship that the Flying Dutchman had been sighted, and strangely enough, there was not a skeptic. The captain made me relate the details twice over, and then he ordered sail on the bark and we stood down the Brazilian coast for 150 miles. The whales had suddenly left us, and it was exactly nine days before the cry of "There she blows!" was heard again. We lowered for a forty-barrel whale and got him, and our old-time enthusiasm returned. We had got him tried out and the decks cleaned up when it came on a calm, quiet night again. The men had had a long rest, and every one of the watch was wide awake, when, at about eleven o'clock, with everything quiet below and aloft, the lookout suddenly called:

"There's a big ship close aboard of us on the starboard bow!"

Every man sprang up, and we all rushed forward in a body, and there, plain as a lighted lamp at midnight, was a big ship bearing down upon us and only a cable's length away. Not one of us remembered that it was a dead calm, and we yelled out in chorus to attract the stranger's attention. He held for us until I could see the sparkle of copper under his fore foot, and then a shift of the helm sent him along our broadside, and the performances of the previous occasion were repeated. He went out of our sight after rounding to, and by that time our captain was on deck. He questioned every man separately, and all told the same story; and later on, as he stood with me on the quarter, he said:

"Mr. Merwin, that's bad luck again. It may mean something more than losing a whale."

Next day we raised a whale and he stove two boats and killed three men, and it was eleven days after that before we raised another. On the night of the tenth, with all the men in my watch wide awake, and the ship drifting off before a gentle breeze, the ghostly visitor came out of the darkness again, ran us past from stern to stem this time, and was seen as plainly as before. Next day we raised three whales at once. Down went three boats, the captain leading. I killed my whale almost at once. The other boats made fast and were run off, and from that day to this have never been heard of. We saw the stranger no more after that. Had he appeared once more I believe that every man of the crew would have leaped into the sea and sought death by drowning.

SEA MYSTERIES

The sea is of itself a mystery, but the mysteries of the sea are many and deep, and are added to each month. A ship's boat, from which the name has carefully been obliterated, and which holds the emaciated bodies of two men who have starved to death, is picked up in the Pacific to-day; to-morrow a Cunarder crossing the Atlantic reports seeing a sailing ship bottom up; next day a derelict schooner sails herself into some port in the Caribbean Sea, and nothing can be learned of the crew who manned her. And it may be that on the next

some great steamer leaves port on her voyage to Europe and is never heard of more. As an old sailor, I have had the luck to encounter some of these strange things, and I will relate the incidents without exaggeration.

In the year 1861 I was mate of a brig called the *Henry* and *William*, sailing between San Francisco and the Sandwich Islands. She was a small, snug vessel, a fast sailer, and the captain was William Lansing. He and his brother Henry were the owners, and the brig was named after them. Just at daylight one June morning, in the year I have mentioned, while we were 300 miles from the islands, a schooner was sighted dead ahead. We had a fair breeze over the starboard quarter, and the schooner had all sail set, and was making good progress. Sails were not an unusual sight on that route, and we gave the stranger little attention until we found that we were overhauling her. She was exactly on the true course to the islands, and we were therefore in her wake. She was hulled down when we first discovered her, but by the time we had washed down and breakfast had been served she was not over two miles ahead. There were some smart schooners flying in that trade, and the fact of our outsailing this one so handsomely put us all in good spirits. We were humming along after her at nine or ten knots an hour, when she suddenly came up into the wind in the most lubberly fashion, shivered there for a moment, and then broached to and was driven off before the wind sideways. It was lucky for her that the breeze was no stronger, for the schooner was light and the movement would have brought disaster.

As soon as I saw the schooner in trouble I seized the glass and ran half way up the fore-shrouds, and it wasn't a minute before I made the discovery that her decks were entirely clear of men. At this hour of the morning both watches should have been on deck, but not a sailor was visible. This was an unheard of occurrence, but, as she had no signal of distress flying, and stood too high in the water to have been abandoned for a leaking vessel, I could hardly credit my vision. I looked again and again, examining every foot of her decks, but it was a plain fact that not a living person was in sight. I reported the matter to the captain, and by that time we were so close aboard that all our crew could note the condition of things with the naked eye. Our ship's bell was rung, and the men shouted in chorus, but nothing came of it. It was then determined to board her, and, as the brig was laid to, I went off with three men in the yawl, and was soon at the stranger's side. I was burning with curiosity at the start, but the nearer we approached the stranger the more curiosity gave way to awe and fear. There had been some terrible work aboard of her, or she would not be in that condition. Had a malignant fever taken off the last of the crew, or was it mutiny and its ghastly consequences? I waited a long minute after hooking on to her forechains to listen for some sound aboard, but the stillness of death reigned from bowsprit to companionway. I nodded to one of the men to come along, and next moment was over her bows.

I had expected to meet with some shocking sight, but was disappointed. The decks were free and passably clear of raffle. Some of the coils had fallen off their belaying pins, and I could see at a glance that the decks had not been washed for several days, but aside from this I could detect nothing out of the way. The scuttle was drawn over the fore-castle entrance and bolted. My first action was to open this, and the rush of air told me that the fore-castle had not been ventilated for several days. Seizing a capstan bar which leaned against the anchor windlass, I pounded smartly on the deck and called out to know if anybody was below, but no answer came. The man with me, who was an old salt, grew so nervous that he would have returned to the boat but for my positive commands to the contrary. As soon as satisfied that the fore-castle was clear of men I felt that the schooner was deserted, and we at once lowered away the sails. This checked her drift, and the brig turned on her heel and came down close to us again.

The next point for inspection was the cabin. I went down alone, and in two or three minutes was satisfied that it had

no occupants, living or dead. There was no disorder—no sign of haste or plunder. I was sniffing the air as I moved about, and I could detect no odor to prove that an epidemic had raged. When I went on deck the brig was within speaking distance, drifting at the same pace as the schooner, and I informed Captain Lansing of the state of affairs and sent the boat to bring him over. When he came we descended into the fore-castle and lighted the lamp. There was plenty of oil in it, proving that some hand had turned out the light in the usual way. We then went to the cabin. Everything appeared as if the officers had simply gone on deck, except that there was not a single article of wearing apparel. This was likewise true of the fore-castle. We looked for the schooner's log, but it was gone, as also were her papers and charts. We rummaged the cabin for half an hour, but found nothing whatever to enlighten us. Her name ought to have been on the stern, but when the boat was ordered to pull around her no name of vessel or port was found. It had not been scraped or painted out recently, but as far as one could judge she had not carried a name for years. Then we made a search along the decks. She had no small boats at all. Not even an initial letter was painted or stamped on anything. We sounded the well, and found her dry as a bone. We pulled off the hatches, and found her in sand ballast. She had plenty of fresh water and provisions, and in the cabin were six muskets and plenty of ammunition.

Our inspection and investigation lasted three hours, at the end of which time we were no wiser than when we began. Here was a stanch, tight schooner picked up in mid-ocean with all sail set. Those who had abandoned her had taken the utmost precaution that she should not be identified, but for what reason we could not even conjecture. Here was a lump of salvage for us worth looking after, and Captain Lansing determined to take her to the islands. We hadn't an extra man on the brig. Indeed, we were one short of our complement. We had therefore determined to take a tow line to the brig and hang by her at least while the weather was safe, and had begun our preparations, when an "ox-eye" or squall was seen gathering down in the south, and we had to hurry aboard the brig to make all snug. The squall hit us fiercely, and lasted nearly half an hour, and when we came out of it the schooner had turned turtle within half a mile of us, and the prize had slipped from our grasp.

Did we ever learn anything further about her? Not a word, singular as it may seem. The incident was published in scores of papers, and called to the attention of thousands of sailors, but none of them was ever able to furnish any true information. What do I think? Well, it was one of the mysteries, but no stranger than some others I have had a hand in.

A surveyor employed by the St. Louis, Bartlesville and Pacific Railroad Company, which purposes to build a line from Joplin, Mo., to Pond Creek, Okla., saw a remarkable sight through the glass on his transit instrument while running a survey on Sand Creek, fifteen or sixteen miles northeast of Pawhuska, in the Osage Indian reservation, recently. The country at that place is broken and indented with canyons. The surveyor had turned his instrument to see the flagman behind him, but beyond the flagman about 300 yards was something that caused the surveyor to gasp in astonishment. A large panther, at the edge of a small clearing, was gazing intently at the surveyors. Through the glass the panther's movements could be clearly seen. The surveyors shouted at the beast, which quickly ran into the timber.

Among all the popular games of to-day none perhaps is of greater antiquity than tennis, for it is said to have originated in the ball games of the ancient Greeks and Romans. In the first place the ball was struck by the hand, later on heavy gloves were worn or cords strapped round the palm; and the racquet was contrived during the fifteenth century in France, where the game was very popular, and thence introduced into England.

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